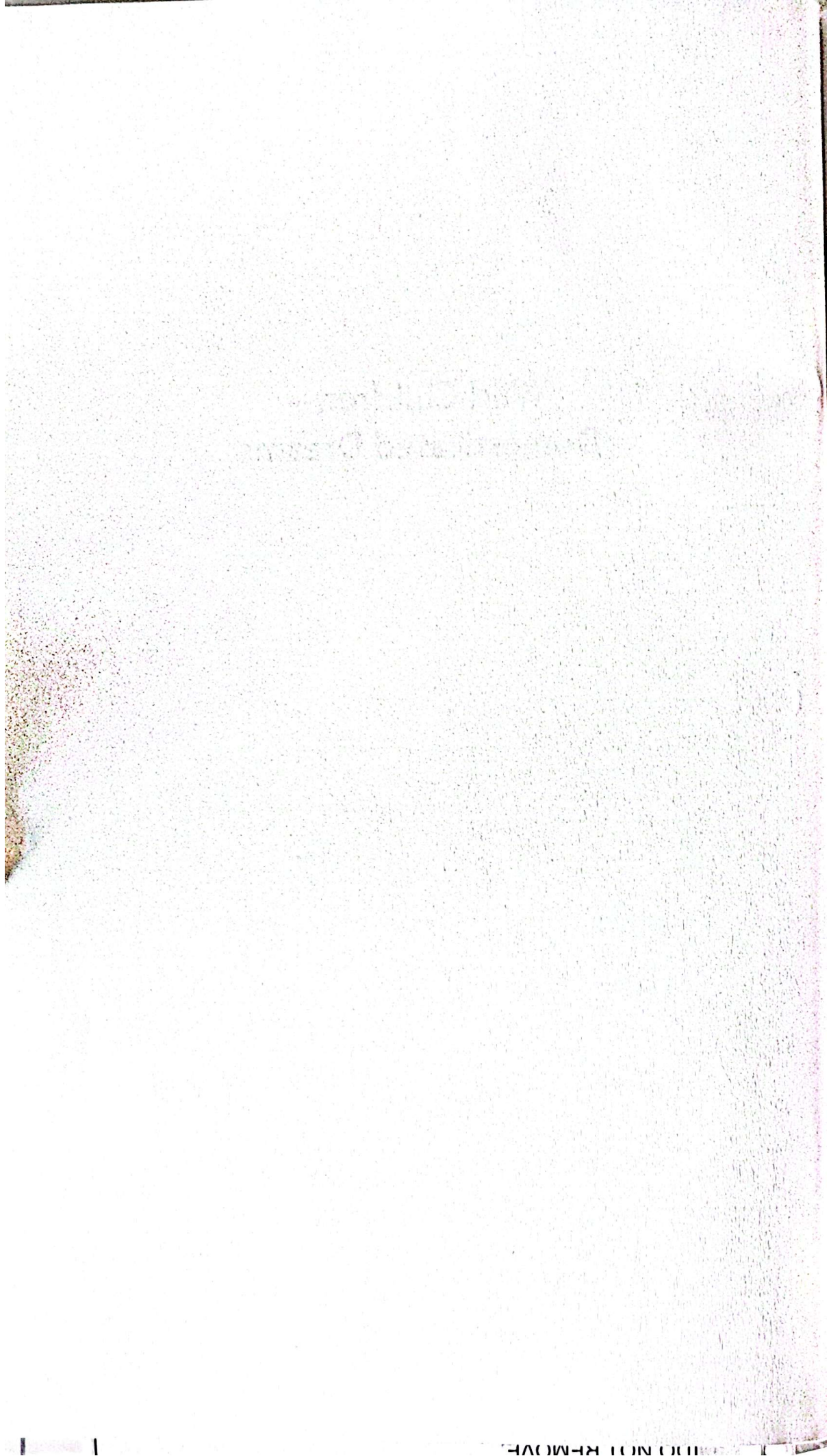


Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams



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Civilization and the Birth of Education

Layla AbdelRahim

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For Ljuba

In the Beginning ...

This book is a side effect of my anthropological and literary research conducted over the years into how people live and on the essence of their relationships, particularly as their attitudes towards other humans and nonhumans are mostly expressed through dominance and violence. The violent essence of our social relationships with the world is often veiled with a grammar for “manners” and “politeness,” but as this book will argue, construction and normalization of this violence constitutes the purpose itself of our domestication, socialization and education. To be civilized, among other things, is to be polite, and to be polite is to cover up both aggression and discontent, to pretend that everything is well and not cause a “scene.” To be civilized, hence, is to know how to hide one’s pain and how not to know of the “unpleasant” experiences of others. In other words, to be educated in civilization is to be taught how not to know life. Civilization, violence and denial constitute intricate elements of education and, in this respect, this book articulates the very core of my inquiry into human relationships with each other and their world. For, regardless of whether I was interviewing rebels fighting in East Africa, conducting anthropological research on social work, medicine and law in northern Europe, or observing children’s learning in North America, the question of what is knowledge and how knowledge gets constructed, transmitted and assimilated kept hearkening back to how we conceptualize humanhood and with this childhood. For, our understanding of what it means to be human affects how we understand what it means to be a child and hence has a direct bearing on the experience of childhood in a world regimented and conquered by human adults.

Concepts such as “humanity,” “animality,” “personhood,” “childhood,” “adulthood,” “nature,” etc., are social constructs that, in civilized cultures, draw their meaning from an epistemology of domestication. I use these terms in their anthropological sense, but would caution that still numerous anthropologists are unable to overcome their civilized biases and therefore often continue to attribute an anthropocentric value to such terms as domestication, civilization or culture. In this book, the word “culture” means the strategies and endeavours that a group chooses for subsistence; namely, what and how its members eat, the ways in which they interact with the community of life on their land base, and their strategies for reproduction and child rearing are among some of the fundamental elements of culture. Cultural strategies can be adapted and negotiated, and, in turn, can influence and modify genetic information, which is also linked to cultural narratives and questions of subsistence. Cultural artefacts such as weapons, pottery

or museums, which are often used as synonyms for culture, constitute only some of the ways in which the ontological premises in cultural narratives are expressed. For the purposes of my work, in which I examine the ontological roots of cultural systems, the varying levels of complexity or superficial details between “cultural products” — for example, military technology and fungi — make little difference. What is critical here is whether their eco-social relationships are driven by parasitic or symbiotic principles. Since the ontological premises underlying the development of military technology by a group of humans stems from a parasitic system of one-way flow of domination and consumption, the implications of this supposedly complex system for diversity, sustainability and life are ultimately the same as those of a deadly virus epidemic or the attack of an organism by cancer cells. In both instances, monocultural attitudes towards subsistence attack diversity with a fatal outcome. The premises in symbiotic relationships, in contrast, strive for a two-way flow of energy and exchange, thereby serving diversity. In this respect, the works of art that hang in contemporary Western museums, often priced for millions of dollars, are part of the same process that allows for the culture of violence. This process requires the development of military technologies, since the production of symbolic and cultural capital fulfils the same hierarchical needs of an unequal one-way flow of energy (labour and resources) and hence of consumption and control.

It is in this sense that cultures of domestication differ drastically from cultures of wildness. For, rooted in symbiotic relationships, wild cultures conceive of beings as free to be who they are, existing for their own purpose and recognizing that co-operation will enhance their lives and make everyone thrive. Domestication, on the other hand, entails the appropriation of the purpose of life of those whom the domesticator defines as “other” for the benefit of the (human) owner. Again, for the purposes of this work, distinctions between husbandry and domestication are of little relevance here, for both practices stem from interference in the reproductive strategies of others for the purpose of consumption or the benefit of the one who interferes. Hence, human interference in breeding and genetically modifying crops is critically different from the bees engaging in the pollination of flowers, since the bees and the flowers coexist symbiotically. The bees do not consume the flower and the flower does not live to feed the bees. They engage with each other with mutual respect and co-operation. However, human interference in the reproduction of turkeys through artificial insemination for the purpose of consuming the animals is a parasitic practice that uses rape, murder and ignorance of the suffering of the turkeys in order to control reproduction and to alter the *raison d'être* of turkeys: civilized human animals conceptualize turkeys as existing exclusively for the purpose of feeding humans.

To legitimate this practice, the civilized have devised an epistemology that naturalizes violence and suffering for anthropocentric needs and thereby

invented humanism and pedagogy. According to Roy Ellen in the *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, the first victims of this appropriation, exploitation and violence — known as domestication — were plants, especially the large-seeded wild grasses such as emmer wheat in the Middle East around 17,000 B.P. Hunters domesticated dogs in Southeast Asia around 12,000 B.P. and in North America around 11,000 B.P. before these peoples proceeded to domesticate plants (Ellen in Ingold 1997: 207–221). The enslavement of other animals, according to Ellen, followed the domestication of crops for the purpose of labour and consumption (ibid.).

Another important concept to define here is civilization, which is the sum outcome of the products of domestication. Because wild societies do not appropriate the purpose of being of other persons or species, they rely on constant movement and symbiotic relationships for subsistence, which means that moving living beings help to secure the improvisation and diversity of life. Agricultural societies, in contrast, rely on the interrelated concepts of “permanence,” “ownership” and “time.” Ownership implies permanence whereby a domesticator can legitimately and permanently own the victim of domestication, either in terms of labour or product, in the same way that a copyrighted concept allows the “owner” of the idea to always own the product of the concept that is then produced by the toil of other nonhuman and human “resources.” Through an elaborate epistemological process, a victim is thus constructed as existing for the purposes of domestication. This relationship of servitude and control binds the domesticator and domesticated to sedentary life, where movement is minimized and controlled. Domestication thus imprisons its victims and confines them and their owners to one-way relationships of violence where the domesticator possesses the right to kill and consume and the victim’s resistance is rendered illegitimate. In addition to imprisonment and murder, domestication instils monotony on life. It needs schedules, curbs imagination and eliminates playfulness and improvisation, because control presumes permanence, predictability and the elimination of the element of surprise. If life means movement through chaos and diversity for the simple pleasure of being, then, in more than one way, rooted in domestication, civilization is a place of stillness and death.

Domestication and civilization thus constitute the process of colonization of space and its resources. They construct a specific epistemology that naturalizes violence and ignorance and create elaborate pedagogical methods to infect “resources” and their “owners” with an epistemology that effectuates the construction of time, permanence and mortality, in addition to ensuring that future generations do not go feral, neither on genetic nor narrative levels. Civilization and education are thus about securing the status quo of inequality, immobility, consumption and ignorance; they are both driven by an impetus for colonization of the mind as a space of personal desires, aspirations, imagination and will. Through all of that, this impetus colonizes

the physiological space of the “resources” as bodies that would enable the colonization of other species and their spaces.

My attempt to understand the deeper meaning of culture, civilization and violence thus led me to write this book on the wildness of children and the domestication of our dreams as civilization alters our *raison d'être* and strives to stamp out our yearning for wildness.

The value of this work hence stems precisely from its place between intention and accident, for it has imposed itself with an urgency revealing the crucial link that holds civilization together, a link that ensures that civilized values live on with us, through us and regardless of us. The process by which cultural constructs, embodied by our desires and livelihoods, infiltrate our bodies implicates the physiological body both as an epistemological construct that demands specific methodologies in education and as a body of knowledge. Here, the physiological aspect of a human being becomes linked to the amalgam of cultural dispositions and ontological positions in a real and tenacious way. The child plays a central role in this nexus of knowledge and its embodiment, since both the methods and the contents of education inform the larger narrative of civilization.

In this sense, the personal body is as much a social construct as it is an exercise in epistemology. The ways that people choose to live their lives inevitably leads to the question of how children should be raised and what kind of knowledge should be transmitted to them. At the same time, the body is a real space, a repository of narratives that then act upon the outer space that we inhabit. Pedagogical cultures are thus directly linked to how we interpret the purpose for existence: for instance, were we destined to rule, change and consume the world or are we meant to be insignificant co-worlders, earthlings, in a vast and diverse community? This leads to the basic question at the root of pedagogical systems: namely, whether a social group constructs human or children's nature as inherently good or evil, or whether children can be trusted and left alone or are to be mistrusted and thus educated and controlled in their daily lives as well as in their learning. The answers to these questions determine the type of information to be transmitted to future generations and the knowledge from which they should be shielded. Ultimately, the type of life and system of subsistence we envisage for ourselves leads to the type of socio-ecological relationships which, in turn, leads to the question of whether children are seen as capable of learning how to live in this world on their own or whether they need to be taught. Again, the larger narrative on human nature and the purpose for the existence of everything and everyone in the world informs the approaches to raising new generations — a narrative that formulates human knowledge and shapes their world.

Therefore, this book focuses on what prompts pedagogical considerations and the serious ramifications of these pedagogies for livelihood and human

socio-environmental relationships. In the context of wilderness, there is no single party line except for the principles of diversity, leisure and life. In the context of civilization, this starts with naturalizing hierarchy and violence and then devising methods of training the "human resources" to want to spend their lives doing what their superiors want of them. The most effective way to achieve this is through standardized obligatory education. Pedagogical methods thus respond to cultural needs and stem from the ontological foundation of how humans see themselves and what desires they choose to instil in children, whom the civilized see as future adults.

Just like colonialist market economy, obligatory schooling has been globalized and today constitutes the norm for almost all human societies. Concomitantly, schooling is seeing an exacerbation of violence, bullying, medication for depression and various "learning and personality disorders" on an unprecedented scale. Without a serious examination of the very foundation of education, all attempts to "improve" schooling remain mere cosmetic touches. Politicians and other administrators of "human resources" cash in on their characterization of the school system as having failed yet claim it to be a salvageable project if only they could get elected and receive more funds. I propose to look at the question of "failure" of schools from a different angle: what if schools are actually successful because they do what they were originally designed to do? What if at their inception, their purpose was to formulate the human being as a violent predator and hence both the violence and the depression in school constitute a response to civilized requirements?

The aim of this book is therefore to examine the premises of civilization, whose ontological origins gave birth to the very concept of education. Personal motivations of individual teachers are not relevant here, because the focus of the book is the deeper mechanisms that drive civilization. For, regardless of individual intentions, if we refuse to listen to the voices of wilderness and to heed their needs for diversity and for life, if we fail to question the premises of domestication and its links to education and civilization, if we continue to view our current institutions and pedagogies as benign and essential, inevitable attributes of life, we remain complicit in the re-enactment of the deadly narrative that has colonized the world and brought it to the brink of extinction.

By its very nature, this is an interdisciplinary inquiry and its methodology is reflected in both its dialogical form and comparative content. I resort to anthropological studies, philosophical discussions, as well as to my personal observations that reflect the different conceptualizations of children's nature, definitions of intelligence and understandings of knowledge. This format makes academic material accessible and relevant; it allows the reader to engage with theory as life and with life as ontology.

The interdisciplinary nature of the subject matter is also reflected in the structure of the book. Because introductions and conclusions are never

clear-cut areas, but are rather intrinsic to the inquiry at hand, even though “In the Beginning” and “In the End” suggest a linear procession, they close the circle in an attempt to overcome the linear progression to which we are accustomed in our civilized epistemology and which is nonetheless present in this book — it is still written in a civilized space, using civilized tools.

Having introduced some of the terminology in “In the Beginning,” the “Indispensable Introduction” then walks the reader through “civilized space” and towards the next chapter, which explores the domestication of children and our dreams as the very locus of civilization and alienation. The chapter “On Objects, Love and Objectifications” examines the meaning of civilized love in the context of domestication and consumption from the perspective of anarchist physiological theory; Chapter 4, “On Modernism and Education,” takes this analysis further and explores the unschooling and anarchist perspectives on both the physiological level of organisms and on the institutional level. These two chapters have been published in *The Paulinian Compass* (Vol. 1, No. 2, 2009, and Vol. 1, No. 3, 2009, consecutively). Both essays have been significantly revised and expanded for this book to offer, in addition to critique, ways of overcoming institutionalized violence and its epistemology of death. “In the End and towards a Feral Future” leaves us with the words of a child craving wilderness with its deep spirituality that is life.

The Ontological Roots of Education

An Indispensable Introduction

Ljuba is three-and-a-half years old. We are in a crowded and wooded area of Parc Angrignon and I explain to her that she should not follow strangers and stray far from me. Ljuba says that she understands and agrees with this. "I will never go away with strangers."

She then goes to play next to a 7-year-old boy and his 11-year-old sister. Soon, she joins them in their ball game and after five minutes, the ball rolls into the bushes behind the trees and off the footpath. The three children instantly vanish. I rush there, raising my voice: "Ljuba, you promised not to disappear with strangers."

Ljuba appears. "Yes, Mama. I will never go anywhere with strangers."

I: "But you just did."

Ljuba: "But these are not strangers. We've been playing together. They are so friendly."

Montreal, September 2002

The story of our world is that of childhood and parenthood; for in the context of its ephemeral dimensions, the ability to regenerate bodies, species, dispositions, ideas and cultures is what perpetuates existence and without which the world would either cease to exist or would alter the mechanisms that reproduce it. Therefore, in order to understand childhood, it is crucial to explore questions, connections and threads from diverse disciplines, which, at first glance, might appear not to share much in common with the reproduction of bodies, minds, knowledge and life. Most important, the story of our human world is one of how we know who is a stranger, a friend, family or foe and of how to inhabit space, namely, who do we share our time and space with, if at all.

Ljuba was born in Russia and we came to Canada when she was one-and-a-half. But it is not until having returned to Russia in 2005 that the above journal entry struck me with how my own worries and mundane decisions are distinctly shaped by the social context in which I find myself and how differently I react to Ljuba's social explorations in different places. In contrast to the above entry, consider the following:

"Hey little girl, what's your name?" asks a 7-year-old boy on the playground enclosed by four high-rises in a Moscow neighbourhood.

“Ljuba. And yours?”

“Seva. Tanja and I are playing catch. Do you want to join us?”

Ljuba touches the boy and the children scatter in different directions laughing. I smile and go back to the apartment to read, leaving them alone. Except for the passersby, there is not a single adult on the benches at the playground.

Moscow, June 2005

Later, during our visit to Tver that same summer, I needed to buy a pair of shoes. Our friends Irina and Otar were working full time and so they asked their 7-year-old son, Danja, to take me around the city and show me the places where I could find what I needed. Danja led the way as we took the tram, the bus, and the minibus with several transfers. At a certain point, Ljuba and Danja exclaim in one voice pointing to a building, “That’s where Ljuba used to live!” Indeed, we had lived in that building until the end of May 2000, that is, five years ago.

Tver, June 2005

Even though the above episodes from life in Canada and Russia appear to differ drastically, they nonetheless have more in common with each other than with the way Indigenous children inhabited their space before colonization. For, both the Soviet and the contemporary North American anthropologies are civilized and are therefore based on the principles of monoculturalism and anthropocentrism.¹ Civilized conception of safety and danger in both cultures drives the impetus for the designation of all space on earth exclusively for human purposes. Knowing animals as dangerous and as competition to human spaces comes from an epistemology that constructs nature — including animal and human nature — as inherently dangerous and violent. This rationalization of violence informs the very concept of “management” that is responsible for the control of labour, resources and space. In this respect, both the Soviet and the North American epistemologies drive management practices whose goals are to “sanitize” their spaces for human use and to construct them as separate from the “other” or the “stranger.” The major difference between their practices was that city and town planning in the Soviet Union designated public spaces for the community of the proletariat, assuming that everyone as citizen of that space shared humanist interests, while in North America, the evolutionary narrative and monotheism have depicted danger as lurking in the depth of the very nature of the human soul. After all, both the sinful genesis of civilized humanity and the conception of evolutionary “success” are rooted in predation, that is, murder.

Not only do these episodes from life point to the obviously different ways of raising children, they also reveal that inhabiting a space is a matter of how

we relate to others and whom we choose to include as “us” and whom to designate as “other,” “stranger” and “danger.” As the two children, Ljuba and Danja, demonstrate, however, it is the moment as well as the living memory of relationships that guide children through their lives and converge in them the dimensions of consciousness, time and space. These distinctions inform the civilized *doxa*. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1990) explains that *doxa* is the underlying and unspoken knowledge that interferes with the *habitus*, or the sum of the codes of behaviour and dispositions, that a person inherits from previous generations and which affect personal decision making on various conscious and unconscious levels in a process he refers to as *praxis* or the “economy of effort.”

Thus, the way in which people use and regiment the space they inhabit informs how they interact with others and whether they react to them with fear or trust. In Soviet Russia, children’s playgrounds were designed to be enclosed by high-rises and apartment complexes where children played by themselves. Children as young as five walked to school alone or with friends and, for the most part, decided for themselves when to go out, where, and with whom. They had chores and, even when the living conditions were cramped, in these decisions they had private lives.

Half a century ago in North America, children’s spaces and the concept of “stranger” were similar to Soviet childhood culture. Jack Zipes (2010) and John Taylor Gatto (1992) reminisce about the time when children played freely in the neighbourhood, running off to the river with friends, knowing what sunset and sunrise are, because they — the children, the sunset and the sunrise — are all there in the world. Both scholars demand for public space to be returned to children and that the concept of community as a haven of protection be restored.

These authors are not alone in their call. Throughout the history of civilization, human and nonhuman animals have always resisted the expropriation of land, extermination, and dispossession of viable knowledge and wildness. Resistance and rewilding — namely, the restoration of the wild purpose of being across the lines of oppression and speciesism, an act which thereby reinstates diversity and viability — of inner and outer spaces continues, even though most of the globe has been colonized. Not surprisingly, some of these initiatives come from individuals and groups in the university. For example, in April 2011, I was invited to share a panel organized by students of American Studies at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque entitled, “Radical Sustainability, Beyond Green Capitalism: Anarcho-Primitivism, Feminism and Christianity in a Conversation for an Endangered World.” Concordia University in Montreal also boasts of a range of initiatives on skill- and knowledge-sharing, including the University of the Streets Café and QPIRG (Quebec Public Interest Research Group), that engage in the recuperation and healing of public spaces.

One such recuperated space in Montreal is La Ruche d'Art: Community Studio and Science Shop. Janis Timm-Bottos, a clinical therapist who now teaches art therapy at Concordia University, whose work encompasses a wide range of topics and disciplines, interconnecting questions of suffering, dispossession and healing, opened La Ruche as one of her sustained practice research initiatives whose purpose is to create welcoming spaces of healing. "Therapy is the care of the soul," says Timm-Bottos in an interview conducted for this book in December 2012. She stresses the "caring element" over the "need to heal the damage," because

therapy is repair of damage as a culture, not as an individual. It is not a personal expression as much as it is connecting people to a bigger awareness: we're in it together. Initially, therapy comes out of a state of empathetic regard for another. This way of beginning to interact with another human being is incredibly therapeutic, because no matter what is going on, there is a stance of kind regard for that human being, an understanding that they're doing the best they can in that moment. And that goes for all of us. We have to give to ourselves that same kind regard, that some days are better than others. My premise in this idea of therapy is that it is really about creating environments where we have moments of interaction with each other that we may not otherwise have opportunities for in the everyday consumer driven world. So, as a mother, my work has always been to figure out how to create spaces for my children and other people's children where they are able to meet people they would never have an opportunity to meet, and try to create the most diverse environments possible so that everyone has an opportunity to be enriched and share their riches with each other.

Throughout history, it seems to have been the role of the mother to create space that is going to foster these relationships. Once this space is created, then nothing more has to be done, because the space itself begins to act in a facilitative way with what happens. I find that in the community studio: if it is set up correctly and if certain beginning premises are agreed upon, like this idea of kind regard and being welcoming to anyone who would come, then you don't have to do anything else, because people know how to heal. They need spaces; they need environments to heal in. And there is some research that shows this, such as Alexander's Rat Park. Bruce Alexander repeated Skinner's experiment, which was the basis for the war on drugs. Unlike Skinner's small boxes, however, Alexander created these wonderful places, parks, where rats would have the space to play around, they had all the materials they needed to create their nests, they had their families and community. It was an elaborate space for rats. And what

he found was that the rats would never choose to drink the morphine-laden water. They always chose the clean water. Even when he took the rats out of the park and, like Skinner, got them addicted, and then brought them back to the park, they would still drink clean water. They were not addicted to the morphine. The idea is that when given the right environment, the rats chose health, well-being, and their families over being addicted. (Timm-Bottos 2012)

If left untaught with civilized knowledge, children are capable to tuning in to this relationship between space and well-being.

At the age of nine, after extensive discussions on drug addiction, Ljuba observed, "Probably the crystal meth addicts in the neighbourhood are addicted, because nobody loves them and so they do not know that life can be beautiful. I am going to design a biodiversity garden for them, where they will know that everyone is precious." Her design, which she called "The Island of Montreal," won the first prize at the science fair at the Atwater Children's Library in 2008, and she went on to clean up a little garden where she planted roses together with potatoes, mixed in other seeds, recycled rain water, and made a fish pond for a variety of fishes and amphibians. A formerly scary place, the neighbours welcomed this transformation by a nine-year-old and everyone came out to contribute with seeds, plants, or help.

Montreal, September 2008

Children, rats, scientists, therapists and others know that we all need community and a thriving environment to live. Timm-Bottos, Alexander and Ljuba all tune into the importance of diversity and space for mental, emotional and physical health thereby tapping into the critical effect of the underlying cultural premises on our dispositions towards others and the space we inhabit. Their observations indicate that, deep inside, we all know that to live intelligently is to have healthy relationships with a living and accepting community, which requires that we engage with the world empathically. This leads to the same questions discussed earlier on the importance of diversity and sharing with those whom the civilized construct as different and separate from ourselves. Here, it is important to mention that "empathy" does not merely mean the ability to feel what the other feels and to imagine and strive towards knowing what it is to be the other but then going on with one's life as if nothing happened. Empathy entails taking this knowledge about the other to (re)examine one's own actions, choices and role in the experiences of the other. Such knowledge ultimately affects the lives of everyone in an organic way. Conversely, a socio-economic *praxis* that is rooted in an ontological stance of consumption, domestication, categorization, and hence segregation fosters a culture that inflicts suffering, loneliness and devastation. It damages indi-

viduals and whole groups because, as a hierarchical structure of dominance and possession, it is hostile to egalitarian principles and sharing. It damages our world. And, like all bodies, this body of civilized (un)knowledge has an immunity system built into its structure to ensure its perseverance, which I examine in depth later in my discussion of institutions, *habitus* and *praxis*.

To return to my journal entries above, I contend that even if human children had more agency in the public space, which is colonized by civilized adults, both the Soviet Union and the America of half a century of yore are still based on anthropocentrism that operates from the civilized conception of the world, at the basis of which stands the insatiable appetite of domestication, or more accurately, the colonization of minds, bodies and space. In this respect, the progression towards the all-engulfing fear was only a matter of pace. Most important, however, is that this fear is well founded, since the relationships that govern the civilized spaces are predatory.

These identifications of “stranger” and “friend” are further intertwined with the concept of ownership, “resources” and competition, and stand in stark contrast with the ontological premises of wilderness. This is why my discussion of childhood and pedagogical cultures had to be preceded by an analysis of these basic definitions, particularly of civilization, since the very concept of “education” cannot exist outside of the context of civilized relationships. For, the instant that human animals conceived of the possibility of designating existence as “resources,” they invented the concept of the right to consume the labour, life and/or flesh of that resource. This is consumerism per se and this consumerist attitude towards the world called for the domestication of crops and nonhuman and human animals by appropriating their metaphysical purpose as well as their reproduction, both the reproduction of their bodies and of their dispositions thereby facilitating “resource management” and instituting a slave culture.

In this sense, civilization is a system of relationships that fits the world into a hierarchical food chain — an epistemology that binds beings with the chains of consumption. To succeed, domestication cannot stop at conceptualizing the “other” as “own,” it must convince the “other” that she is “other” and “owned.” Namely, it needs to align the other’s will with the domesticator’s needs. This requires a method and a system of knowledge that structure desires, obedience and contentment with servitude. Furthermore, in order to be domesticated, the human or nonhuman person needs to be taught that she will die if she does not please the one who has succeeded in appropriating food and other necessities, such as water and space, and is successful in killing competition — the competing enterprises, the individuals that comprise them, and the human and animal persons who simply live. Resources have to be taught and constantly reminded that they are resources, for in the wild they would not learn how to fear, suffer and toil; and when not reminded they easily turn feral.

In contrast, wild relationships are based on the principles of diversity and life. Wilderness is the space where living and nonliving beings exist for their own purpose, where the purpose for being remains with the being herself. Rooted in the principles of symbiosis, reciprocity and mutual aid, wilderness does not need an organized system designed to alter the behaviour of others. It does not matter there if children learn alphabets, presidents' names, multiplication tables, names of countries, or whatnot — all of which are markers of property, limitations, hierarchy and dispossession. Therefore, children are not forced to do repetitive and tedious drills in order to absorb information that the civilized impose by threat in order to prepare children for specialized, mostly boring and exhausting future occupations at the service of someone else in exchange for the right to eat and live.

Conceptualization of the purpose of being is linked to the way people imagine their origins and the genesis of the world and hence is an ontological problem. For instance, a storyteller and member of the Achumawi and Atsugewi tribes of Northern California, Darryl "Babe" Wilson teaches Native American oral literature at San Francisco State University and literature at Foothill College in Palo Alto, CA.² He recounts how one day, the world was spun out of a song. Divine forces then presented this world as a gift to children to dwell in and to protect. In Wilson's version of genesis, first there was Void; then there was Thought; then — Song; and then came the Word. For, how could there have been Word before Thought? Wilson asks. Certainly, God couldn't have been so thoughtless as to talk without having thought first? Language must have followed an already existing reality filled with concepts and knowledge, and not the other way around as the theory of linguistic determinism maintains.³

Wilson explains that how we believe the world to have come about directly affects how we choose to live in it. Like other Indigenous traditions, the Achumawi and Atsugewi genesis designates a central part to children and stands in stark contrast to the civilized version of genesis, where the civilized world is meted out as punishment for disobedience through labour and pain — the labour of agricultural civilization and the labour of childbirth. The birth of civilized child-rearing pedagogies is thus rooted in the ontology of suffering and punishment. Punishment, threat and the claim that suffering is necessary also infuse contemporary methods of instruction. It is interesting that in Latin languages, the term "instruction" has two components, education and directives. In other words, education is about following orders.

In contrast to the civilized, Wilson says that seeing the world as punishment for sin or as a gift of life has serious ramifications for the world. Seeing life as a gift impels people to honour the earth and safeguard its diversity, while approaching it as an adverse consequence of a repugnant act prompts them to despise life and treat the world with cruelty and ingratitude. The logic of life imbues the noncivilized ways of rearing and living. For instance,

writing on behalf of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, Erica-Irene Daes says:

Indigenous peoples regard all products of the human mind and heart as interrelated, and as flowing from the same source: the relationship between the people and their land, their kinship with the other living creatures that share the land, and with the spirit world. Since the ultimate source of knowledge and creativity is the land itself, all of the art and science of a specific people are manifestations of the same underlying relationships, and can be considered as manifestations of the people as a whole. (Erica-Irene Daes quoted in Ingold 2007: 150)

The difference between these stances towards genesis is the difference between “primitive” society where members express gratitude for all creation and warn against futile loss of life and “civilized” (consumer) societies that see the meaning for existence in domestication, exploitation and a birth-given right to consume “resources.”⁴ Most significant, this latter views with intolerance any suggestion of wildness or of the world existing for any purpose other than the one decided by the domesticator.

According to paleontological and other historical accounts of humanity, today’s globalized civilization has its root in the Neolithic period roughly between 17,000 and 10,000 B.C.E during which humans domesticated dogs, horses and others, and this brought about the agricultural revolution.⁵ John Zerzan (2008), however, argues that the first impetus for civilization came earlier, propelled by the possibility for abstract thought and representation, namely with the birth of human language and representational arts, which provided an excellent tool for alienation and hence for civilized relationships. Zerzan explains that relationships in civilization are fundamentally exploitative, since they are based on stratification and the “specialization” of labour, because the agricultural way of life brought about sedentary living, the concept of private property, and dependence on outside sources for livelihood, thereby impelling gender, ethnic and speciesist inequalities. Childbirth, child rearing and the designation of specific forms of labour to various groups have played a central role in this new ontology and its materialization in the cultural content that we have come to embody.

In other words, ontological premises inform our dispositions, decisions and actions issuing a social order that directly affects our environment as well as our own physiological landscape through *habitus*, *body hexis*, *doxa*, and *praxis*. Pierre Bourdieu (1990) explains that *habitus* is the flux of history and anthropology and, concomitantly, a vector of the dialectical forces of revolution, permanence and reproduction — the reproduction of events, knowledge, bodies and *esprits* — since *habitus* is the sum of information that a person absorbs from personal experience, social relationships, education

and the cultural heritage of whole epochs.⁶ All of these experiences and “information” become encoded in the flesh thereby forming a person’s durable dispositions, informing choices, and mapping behaviour usually in accord with the social group to which the person “belongs.” As each person internalizes previous — her own and her ancestral — experiences, she becomes aligned with the cultural heritage. Through these dispositions, beliefs, feelings, body and mind, she becomes an integral constituent in the mechanism of the economy of effort, the effort that would have been needed to (re)invent new solutions on each occasion. This economy of effort triggers the mechanism that reproduces cultural and social institutions. Instead of making new decisions, the person economizes effort. Through *habitus* and *doxa*, the underlying knowledge and beliefs of which the person is not aware, the person re-enacts the already established cultural and social patterns of behaviour by applying the previously deduced formulae or conclusions also inscribed into the *body hexis*.

An excerpt from my “field” notes describing an educational project aimed at children aged seven-to-twelve is representative of the other classes I observed in North America and illustrates this practice of instilling the civilized *habitus* in children by imposing on them the view that everything and everyone in the world exists to be consumed in a food chain:

Children are taught from an early age to view the world from a humanist-utilitarian position. Ecological programmes in school, extracurricular activities, or other projects focus on training children to estimate the value of things for humans. This particular scene took place at the “Ecological Biodiversity” session in July 2008, as part of my observation of a UNICEF project in children’s libraries in Montreal during that summer.

UNICEF animators: “Let us draw what you think is important in your neighbourhood or some other place you’ve been to. Who have you seen there?” The eleven children draw.

“Michael, what are these?” Stephanie points to his drawing.

“Trees.”

“Why are trees important?”

Michael ponders, “Mmmm ...

Another animator, Anne, helps him: “Because they give us fresh air. It is important for us to have fresh air.”

“Zoe, what have you drawn?” Stephanie continues.

“A lake.”

“Why are lakes important?”

“They have water.”

“Yes, without water we will die.”

Stephanie walks around the circle.

“Zaki, what do you have there?”

“This is a zebra, that is a lion, this is a tree, and there is a bird and the sun.”

“Veeeeeerrrry goooood, Zaki. Why are zebras important?” Stephanie demonstrates her excitement.

“They run and they are pretty with stripes.”

“Who eats the zebras?” Stephanie prompts him.

“Lions.”

“Yeeeeeeesssss. The zebras are important for the lions to eat.”

“The sun is important because without it we will die.” Stephanie goes on to list the importance of things for us, for our lives and for consumption.

This exercise completely missed the point of biodiversity; namely, that biodiversity implies a variety not only in forms, colours, sounds and shapes, but, most important, in the diversity of needs, experiences, desires, purposes and lives. It ignored the fact that imposing one purpose on everyone — to be eaten by someone else — precludes the very possibility of realizing diversity, which the workshop supposedly intended to teach but instead remained stuck in consumerism. At the same time, the exercise reveals that children are born wild and that they dream of a wild world that exists for its own mystery.

In wilderness, the sun, the trees, the animals and the universe exist regardless of whether we need them. In wilderness, a lioness might occasionally hunt a zebra or a gazelle and share her kill with her pride, but lions do not appropriate the purpose of being of all zebras and gazelles; they do not domesticate them. Lions do not *know* all individual gazelles as their own until the end of time. In the end, each of them — the zebra, the lion and the gazelle — remains with her own self, following her own star, dancing to her own tune. The wild proceed from the perspective of biodiversity, and it is Zaki who tunes into the wild concept that zebras should exist because they run and have stripes: “Whatever else for? And what a stupid question,” his eyes seemed to think.

Food is the central issue here. It is implicit in the questions raised in my opening entries on children’s spaces, in the concept of “stranger,” and it constitutes the central force that drives civilization. Ultimately, the question of food shapes both the methodology as well as the culture of childhood and education. In more than one way, food has been the critical issue of domestication from the beginning since the first domesticators had to conceive the possibility of control over real space through an abstract conception of ownership. For, in order to domesticate, that is, to coerce someone into providing services, the domesticator has to cut off the victim’s access to food. To achieve that, the expropriation of food has to be legitimated and disobedience has to carry “consequences” — namely, hunger and the

threat of pain, starvation and death. These concepts and their logic inform the methods of domestication of animal persons who are “legally” kept in captivity for labour and slaughter for food. They also provide the pedagogical foundation for human children who have been legally rounded up into obligatory classrooms to be educated mostly to serve as human resources and offer their energy, time and lives to be consumed as well as to consume, literally and metaphorically, the lives and the flesh of others.

In this sense, carnivorism, exploitation and alienation are tightly interconnected. Science constructs human primates as carnivorous and the world as a food chain. Predation, whether attributed to divine will or rationalized as an evolutionary choice, is a social construct that has become internalized as integral to human identity. In connection to the legitimization of hunger, disempowerment and dispossession, domestication has defined the human ape as the ultimate predator with some humans constituting natural and legitimate owners, separated and differentiated from their resources, while anyone who threatens this division of ownership with the “knowledge” and definitions on which it is based is constructed as competition worthy of the death penalty. This is incorporated, in every sense of the word, on various levels by the medical and educational establishments. For instance, pediatricians threaten parents that if they do not include animal “proteins” in a child’s diet, the child will not grow and will eventually die. This predatory conceptualization of the self and others is naturalized through language that signals fear and a legitimated destruction of pests, weeds, predators and strangers and is most blatant in the common “business” expression “kill the competition.” The language of the evolutionary narrative further legitimates this practice and promotes occupation and colonization because it calls excessive reproduction “success” — a term that conceals the ecological disaster by defining the current human overpopulation as “evolutionary successful reproductive strategies of the species.”

Consequently, the perspectives of civilization and wilderness have antipodal implications for ways of knowing and defining the self and the world. These philosophical positions affect the choices, actions and dispositions of individuals and groups, both at the conscious and unconscious levels. For instance, these premises inform the civilized statement that “education is indispensable for children because they must get a job when they grow up and they will fail to get a job if they are not educated.” That is, education is necessary to show people their place in the realm of human resources whose lives are to be consumed by work and who, in turn, consume those whom the predatory food chain places lower than themselves.

As the above examples from life show, we inadvertently tune into the possibilities and regimentations of our space. Hence, I instinctually tune in to the social constructs of space: one that conceptualizes public spaces in North America as unsafe places of predation and the other conceives the

Soviet city playground as a place that has been rendered safe because it has been civilized, colonized and humanized. However, both constructs exist in the context of civilization. These civilized possibilities and threats imbue the socio-architectural conception of our inner landscape and outer space and inevitably domesticate us and force us into hostile and stratified relationships based on fear.

This fear of pain, starvation and death is at the very basis of both the content and the method of education and is directly related to the environmental devastation, poverty and extinctions of species and diverse cultures. As Marshall Sahlins argues in "The Original Affluent Society," the societies where the basic premise is that the world is kind and generous do not see the sense in hoarding and expropriating. Their needs are therefore modest and easily met, their trust in the kindness of the universe is deep, and they are the truly affluent citizens of the world. Accordingly, obsessions and avarice are characteristics of the truly poor societies — the industrialized, developed, first world — where expectations are never realized, never meant to be realized, and this lack of realization stimulates the perpetual greed, fear and inequality.

One-third to one-half of humanity are said to go to bed hungry every night. In the Old Stone Age the fraction must have been much smaller. This is the era of hunger unprecedented. Now, in the time of the greatest technical power, starvation is an institution. Reverse another venerable formula: the amount of hunger increases relatively and absolutely with the evolution of culture.

This paradox is my whole point. Hunters and gatherers have by force of circumstances an objectively low standard of living. But taken as their objective, and given their adequate means of production all the people's material wants usually can be easily satisfied....

The world's most primitive people have few possessions, but they are not poor. *Poverty is not a certain small amount of goods, nor is it just a relation between means and ends; above all it is a relation between people. Poverty is a social status. As such it is the invention of civilization.* It has grown with civilization, at once as an invidious distinction between classes and more importantly as a tributary relation that can render agrarian peasants more susceptible to natural catastrophes than any winter camp of Alaskan Eskimo [emphasis mine]. (Sahlins 1974: 36–38)

In other words, the societies that see prosperity in terms of secured access to food, fresh air, water and health for all, understand safety as community with their surroundings. Their safety is rooted in biodiversity and hence their world is a communal space of safety. Since war endangers individuals and their communities, noncivilized societies prefer peaceful negotiations and consider organized violence an aberration. That is why organized warfare does not exist in the wild but constitutes a distinct feature of civilization.

Having reversed the concepts of safety, civilization has also shifted the ways in which the domesticated people relate to the world, to one another and to their own children with dire repercussions for what the civilized define as intelligence and love. The chapters of this book will examine these concepts from different angles as I explore the underlying premises that inform the civilized pedagogy of domestication.

Notes

1. I refer to these spaces in Russia as Soviet because they were designed and created during that era and hence the original intentions and premises continue to imbue these places.
2. Darryl "Babe" Wilson's session at the MLA convention, San Francisco, December 2008. In *Oral Tradition* 13, 1: 157–75 (1998) co-authored with Susan Brandenstein Park, Wilson cites the creation story of his ancestors, the Atsuge-wi. Here, first there was Thought who manifested itself as Voice and then as the being "Kwaw" or "Quon" — the Silver Grey Fox who, with his song, created our world because he got tired of sharing the original world with the constantly changing and challenging Coyote.
3. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003) see language as the formulating medium that gives rise to awareness of what's out there and hence of all knowledge, including science that is influenced by metaphors.
4. There are numerous ethnographic and anthropological accounts of African, American or Asian tribes. As an example, see Moses Osamu Baba's "Tku-Nishi of the Saghalien Ainu" in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 79, 1/2: 27–35 (1949).
5. Domestication of crops and animal husbandry in Asia and Meso-America goes back a mere seventeen thousand years (Ellen in Ingold 1997; Sunderland 1973; Dickens 2004).
6. Like *ande* in Swedish, the French term *esprit* incorporates both mind and spirit and hence linguistically renders the relationship more holistic than the separate terms for "mind" and "spirit" in English and Russian, the languages with which I will be predominantly concerned in this work.

Do Children Dream of Civilized Love?

Civilization and Its Contents

The need for education stems from the civilized demand to alter the needs, dreams, purpose and self-knowledge of the domesticated being and the most basic principle in its methodology is the principle of hunger and fear. These demands of civilization issue a culture that is *a priori* rooted in suffering. The notion that the epistemology of Western civilization, regardless of whether it is based on science or on Christian culture, is rooted in institutionalized suffering is of course not novel. This concept, however, is new to the discourse on schools for children, for isn't school depicted in our civilized imaginary as a place of goodness and enlightenment? A place about which we supposedly reminisce fondly as the experience that shaped us into who we are, assuming that, for the most part, we have come to love what made us? Yes, there are episodes of fighting in the courtyard, of being punished for failing a test or refusing to hand in an assignment, even being bullied. But our civilized narrative tells us that these "unfortunate incidents" are due to the natural propensity of humans towards violence. In fact, we are told that this is precisely why we need schools — to modify our inclinations and control our violent nature. At the same time, and paradoxically so, pediatricians, teachers, psychologists, social workers and the whole apparatus of experts ensures that civilized children are reared both as predators and prey, in other words, as carnivores, managers and proprietors, and concurrently as human resources and prey, thereby reinforcing relationships of violence.

Among all primates, the humans who eat flesh are the only ones to have abandoned their frugivorous and folivorous diet and embraced predation with a zeal that is continually reiterated through the scientific, religious and other fictional narratives that human animals have come to embody in more than one sense. When children are born, they crave mother's milk and as they grow, they exhibit a natural tendency towards eating flowers and fruit. Comparative research on human eating and sleeping patterns in humans, primates and predators, as well as on frugivores, folivores and herbivores indicates that nowhere in nature do civilized human regimens for food, play, coddle and sleep exist.

First, in the wild, there are significantly fewer predators than frugivores, folivores or herbivores (Kropotkin 2006). Second, predators eat sporadically and sleep for extended periods. For instance, lions sleep sixteen hours a day. Herbivores, such as buffaloes, sleep three hours a day, and along with folivores and frugivores, rely on more frequent food intake and lighter sleep patterns.

Whereas in colder climates, sleep and hibernation are vital for survival and hence human and nonhuman persons mostly do not eat at all during winter.¹ Third, human anatomy, with its enzymes and digestive and elimination tract system, remains fitted for a herbivorous diet not suited for the consumption of meat (Stevens and Hume 1995: 112).

Strictly speaking, primate physiology and digestive system are not specialized, that is, primates are omnivorous. Nonetheless, they have a preference for fruits, green leaves and vegetables. In other words, even though primates are capable of digesting animal proteins from ants, birds and smaller mammals, as the paleontological and primatological data indicates, no one, with the exception of a select group of humans, has chosen to become a full-time carnivore consuming bodies on a daily basis. The one billion vegans and lacto-vegetarians around the world today — not to mention all the Indigenous peoples who have been exterminated recently by civilized predators — prove false the myth of the naturally evolved human predator who supposedly responded to selective pressures and chose the best options for its “success.” As the global anthropogenic ecological disaster indicates, this choice of parasitic ontology and an anthropology rooted in predation was the best option for failure.

The repercussions of these choices and epistemological constructs on the culture of human childhood are dire. The first problem is that a hierarchical system of predation and domestication in the context of frugivorous patterns of daily sleep, coupled with the frequent consumption of a carnivorous diet and other energy and labour resources, would not have been sustainable even if human population growth had stayed at zero. In the context of the exacerbated insomnia in civilized countries and in the situation of the world approaching the human count of seven billion, it becomes even more apparent that the predatory choice is not a viable one.² The first indication that a socio-economic system is unsustainable is obviously a decrease in the viability of the community of life and other “resources,” which aggravates competition for any (re)sources that can help sustain (human) life. In the context of parenting choices, this means that the more parents work, the less they sleep, the more they consume, and the more there is pressure on children to “succeed” both in the practical and in the evolutionary scientific sense. In other words, the more catastrophic the global environmental and social situation gets, the more avidly the civilized humans re-enact their evolutionary narrative of naturalized competition through reproduction, predation and control.

The second issue is that civilization shifts human and interspecies relations from symbiotic interdependence and cooperative diversity to monoculturalism and parasitism. This causes several problems. First, unsustainable systems of livelihood are by their nature colonizing, for they constantly need to conquer more territories and resources. In order to colonize successfully,

not only do civilizations rely on war, but more important, they require the successful integration of the new resources into the civilized epistemology and socio-economic relationships and structures. In other words, civilized knowledge has to educate its “resources” into accepting its perspective by destroying their systems of livelihood, relationships and self-knowledge, and replacing these with civilized monoculturalism. Finally, through endless wars and exterminations of “strangers,” “others” and “competition,” civilization demonstrates its deeply set intolerance of diversity in ways of being and of ways of knowing. Most important, it is an intentional modification of life.

In this regard, Paul Patton’s essay “Language, Power, and the Training of Horses” (Patton in Wolfe 2003) reveals the interrelatedness of the construct of childhood, animal and domestication as a system of governmentality of self-(un)knowledge as based on the needs of the tamer/domesticator. Carry Wolfe introduces the main point of Patton’s essay on horsemanship, government, gender and the domestication of children by opening with Hearne’s ideology on training horses:

I try to show, the issue is not so much an unsophisticated theory of language that is used to separate human and animal; indeed, Hearne’s work on how we communicate with animals and inhabit a shared world with them by building a common vocabulary in the training relationship is as supple and complex as any work I know of on this problem. (Wolfe 2003: xvi)

The key phrase that attempts to reconcile morality with the humiliation inflicted by one person training another to obey him on command is “how we communicate with animals and inhabit a shared world with them.” The true nature of the relationship where a person moves into the life of another person, uproots her from her world, confines her to a locked space with bars, harnesses her, and rides her is not a relationship of sharing, but that of domination, invasion and conquest. The only possible way to get around the ethical problem that such an invasion poses and to be able to call it “sharing” instead of what it really is — colonization — is to deny the oppressed party the dignity of personhood and agency, to discredit her knowledge, in addition to defining the “un-person” in terms of the needs and desires of the one holding the title of “person.” That is, the tamed person has to be educated to accept the invasion of the inner self with words (commands), “natural resources” (an iron bit in the mouth), and lack of access to the inhabited space (natural world) by means of physical and symbolic harness. The victim has to be taught to think of her dispossession and imprisonment as “shared space” and to believe that this hierarchical one-way “sharing” is necessary for her happiness, well-being and livelihood.

Language and symbolic representation are the first tools in civilized education.³ They allow for a euphemism conveying a sense of reciprocity,

"shared space," to distort the lived meaning of "invasion," "colonialism" or "conquest." Such linguistic misrepresentation of experience also conceals the true nature of the relationship by calling "communication" what in fact constitutes one-sided commands such as "sit," "jump," "give" and "good boy." Misrepresenting the true nature of coercive relationships becomes easy once the purpose for existence has been defined by the one profiting from the control and exploitation of the other's effort and time.

In his introduction to the collection of essays, Wolfe praises Patton's contribution to the anthology expressly for having identified the problem of unequal relations of power in domestication. He then praises him for "managing to reconcile" these inequalities with the ethical problem that domination poses, because the authors view (1) the concept of equality as dangerous; (2) they believe that training (domestication) brings out the best in the dominated nonhuman people; (3) they claim that domination of animals, children and other domesticated persons is an expression of government, and government is benign. Since they do not question the existence of government and training, they conclude that government, domination and domestication are not only ethical, but even indispensable for living beings:

this does not mean that power and ethics are opposites. Indeed, as Paul Patton — himself a dedicated horseman of many years as well as ... scholar of poststructuralist philosophy — argues here, the training of horses, whether in the traditional "cowboy" methods of domination or the gentler ways of "horse whisperer" Monty Roberts, is indeed an exercise of power, a form of what Foucault calls "government." But this is "by no means incompatible with ethical relations and obligations toward other beings" of whatever species, Patton argues, be they human or animal. Indeed, part of what is valuable about the work of Hearne, Roberts, and others — and about the experience of actually training an animal — is that it helps to make clear the requirements and obligations of those hierarchical relations of power we do enter into (with animals, with children, with each other) and draws our attention to how those requirements are always specific to the beings involved, in the light of which, he argues, the presumption of a one-size-fits-all notion of "equality in all contexts" is "not only misleading but dangerous." (Wolfe 2003: xviii–xix)

Saying that the reason horses exist is because they have evolved to please humans is a clear instance of appropriation of the purpose of the dehumanized "other." This implies that the horses chose to please humans as the "best" evolutionary strategy. The fact that the domesticating humans have imposed only two options on the victims of civilization, "either please us or die," is left unacknowledged. This is precisely the ontological problem

of civilization: the purpose of one's existence becomes to serve the interests of someone else even when this entails acting against one's own interests. Having established a dehumanizing epistemology, the civilized can then claim that "power" and "ethics" are compatible.

Just as Darwin drew his evolutionary theory from observations on animal breeders' selections, most anthropocentric theorizing on the domestication of horses usually comes from people with access to the highly expensive and prestigious network of equestrian domination. The interests and wealth of those with access to this extremely high-value currency of symbolic and material capital are contingent on ignoring the perspective of those whose will gets broken and whose lives are expropriated. Such theory omits reflecting on what it is like to be enslaved, to have an iron bit in one's mouth, to be forced to learn the language of obedience and command, or to have one's definition of self-purpose be contingent on the will and the aesthetic sense of an oppressor. In fact, Wolfe highlights Patton's warning that it is "not only misleading but dangerous" to apply the concept of "equality in all contexts" — the authors openly admit that egalitarianism threatens the very basis of the institution of domination and that, in their opinion, each category of the oppressed has a "naturally" different set of definitions, limitations and expectations.

Translated, the justification of animal training follows this logic: humans help horses to fully realize their ideal, because horses, for some reason, *fail* to be "ideal"; once pushed by the humans in charge, they really end up enjoying being ideal in the eyes of the pushers (Patton in Wolfe 2003: 83). To draw a civilized conclusion such as this, it is necessary to first (1) believe in inherent inequality of people and species and their knowledges; and (2) have faith in the assumption that some persons need to be governed by others and that the governing persons know best how to represent and govern their subjects, who are assumed to be inferior to the governors. This rationale constitutes the very core of civilized human pedagogy: the concept of and yearning for egalitarianism get quashed at the root, while the ranking system defines the individuals in terms of groups to serve in specific niches, specific aesthetic requirements to abide, and other symbolic and material definitions and limitations.

Obviously, subscription to such assumptions entails (1) ignorance and arrogance on the part of those who believe that they have the right to govern others; and (2) a sense of inferiority on the part of those who agree that they need to be governed. To be able to arrive at this position of superiority vis-à-vis others, the governor has to ignore the governed subjects' knowledge about themselves and the subjects have to be subjugated and subjected to the governor's gaze and definition of them. To arrive at a conclusion of inferiority and the need to be governed, one has to be rendered unskilled, unintelligent and specialized in a field imposed by the interests of the owners, management and government. In other words, in order for there to be governance, there

first must be ignorance and a deep mistrust of independence or the ability of human and other animals to live and let life be.

To produce ignorance, domesticators must first eradicate empathy by imposing false, simplified, yet convoluted “arguments” (also known as scientific theory or religion), which when learned by heart make the double standards feel natural. To succeed in dumbing down its subjects, today’s version of civilization has institutionalized a humanist, specifically ethnocentric and mostly male epistemology that renders “logical” the following inconsistencies in logic:

Is training of any kind an indefensible form of co-optation of the animal’s powers? To see why the answers to these questions should be in the negative, we need to hold apart the elements of the training relationship: the disciplinary relations of command and obedience, the relation to animals, and the languages that enable us to interact with them. Disciplinary relations of command and obedience are precisely a means to create and maintain stable and civil relations between different kinds of beings, not only among individuals of the same species, but also between representatives of different species. (Patton in Wolfe 2003: 95)

Like Zerzan, Patton identifies language as the vehicle for the coercive relationship that exists in civilization between the object of training and the master. Further, Patton draws a parallel between three spheres of government or domestication: animal training, the training of children and the ruling over subjects — the most intensive preparation for humans occurring during the training years at school. However, if Zerzan had understood the humiliation and the pain that civilization inflicts, an understanding that has prompted him to examine the core of civilized relations and to seek liberation for all, Patton sees governance as part of a natural order, as improving the victim, as something that brings out more of the “natural” beauty enjoyed by the master, and as needed by and delightful for the victim. Since it is the horse, and not the trainer or the theoretician, who gets the bit in the mouth while being forced to learn how to understand the trainer’s “communication” and to appeal to his sense of beauty and contentment, we only get the perspective of the one who dominates and thus miss the opportunity to examine what it would be like to be beneath the saddle, not above it.

If one were to take the parallel between government and the training of animals, children and citizens to its logical end, one would be forced to re-examine the profound ontological roots of master-slave relations expressed in civilized language. For if we admit the voice of the victim on par with the voice of power whose monologue dominates public discourse, we would be forced to deal with the violent essence of grooming, shaping, and commanding and would have to acknowledge that the dismissal of the

trained, groomed, shaped and commanded being's pain is violence in itself. If, in contrast, empathy and dialogue were the guiding principles of research instead of the established apathy and monologue, then sovereignty, education and domestication would all have been challenged. Patton's essay thus promises a questioning that it never delivers:

In effect, trainers must become like those whom Nietzsche says have acquired the right to make promises. These are beings "who promise like sovereigns, reluctantly, rarely, slowly." Trainers, too, must become like sovereign individuals, aware of "the extraordinary privilege of responsibility" and conscious of the "power over oneself and fate" that this implies. The overlap between the moral cosmos of the trainer and the one we encounter in Nietzsche's writings is also evident in Hearne's remark that, for the trainee dog, "Freedom is being on an 'Okay' command." In other words, freedom only makes sense within a system of constraints; it presupposes both capacities of the subject and their location within relations of power. (Patton in Wolfe 2003: 96)

The challenge to the civilized perspective never comes, because the civilized narrative of power insists that freedom must be constrained for the good of the constrained persons themselves: cows have to be incarcerated and then eaten for their own good, and children and rebels must be punished by means of threats and the infliction of emotional or physical pain for their own benefit.

In this narrative, the "relations of power," in which some individuals are endowed with the knowledge and responsibility to confine, exploit and direct others, are referred to as "relations of trust," thereby projecting a sense of benign necessity for abuse. This narrative makes it inconceivable for the civilized to imagine a horse, a dog, a child or a subject refusing to obey the commands misnamed as "communication." What remains unvoiced in this civilized language is the threat of the death penalty that hovers above this silenced obedience. For, if the enslaved animal rebelled and defended herself against the abuse with fangs or hooves, the animal would be executed by lethal injection. If children turned around to destroy school walls, they would face starvation through joblessness and incarceration in even more severe correctional institutions than the school itself. People who burn down fences and destroy the slaughter machines used for killing or torturing animals, such as the people acting in the spirit of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), receive life sentences in the United States and the equivalent maximum penalty in Canada and other civilized states.⁴

In these situations, the civilized narrative refuses to question the integrity of the people who practice abuse and domination or to challenge its fundamental premise that power is not an egalitarian right. Since the

institutionalized death penalty that hangs over the animal and the rebel does not apply to the trainer, the educator or the invader, it is inaccurate to call "mutual" a relationship where the socially disempowered person, such as the animal, the rebel or the child, does not enjoy the same right to defend her interests, purpose, knowledge and life by legally putting the trainer to sleep. Nevertheless, in addition to misnaming these one-way relationships as "mutual," the ultimate veiling of their abusive essence comes from claiming that they are built on "trust" and "communication":

Just as communication among humans presupposes a degree of trust, so it is apparent that to establish means of communication between humans and animals is also to establish a basis for trust. Hearne points out that the better a dog (or a horse) is trained, "which is to say, the greater his 'vocabulary,' the more mutual trust there is, the more dog [or horse] and human can rely on each other to behave responsibly." Roberts also insists that the point of his method is to create a relationship based on mutual trust and confidence. (ibid.)

In the end, the ultimate expression of violence is the act of referring to a coercive relationship as "a mutual relationship of trust," in which one party has a say over the life and death of the other, while that other is so completely disempowered that her only option is to act out of fear and comply with the demands to serve until she expires. If this were "a mutual relationship of trust," it would not have needed the backing of the whole apparatus of laws, military, police and other civilized professionals to protect trainers, rulers and owners from being treated the same way they treat their subjects-objects.

Relationships involving communication and command-obedience are, of course, common within human social life. That is why, in *Join-Up: Horse Sense for People*, Roberts can argue for the extension of the principles of his horse-training techniques to the whole gamut of human relations involving differences of power and capacity. He suggests that relations between parents and children, women and men, managers and employees will all be better served by an approach that employs nonverbal as well as verbal means to establish trust and invited co-operation. Hearne also points out that much of human social life presupposes relationships of command and obedience. We expect obedience to some at least of our own basic needs and desires on the part of other people and we teach obedience to our children. The import of this line of thought in both Hearne and Roberts is to suggest that we do well to attend to the requirements of the hierarchical and communicative relations in which we live, and that certain kinds of emphasis on equality in all contexts are not only misleading but dangerous....

Hearne points to the similarities between the moral cosmos of training and that of the older forms of human society in which “obedience was a part of human *virtu*,” thereby drawing attention to the fact that the idea of society that is expressed in the practice of training is at odds with our modern egalitarian ethos. (ibid.: 96–97)

“We expect obedience” is obviously spoken from the point of view of the master and not from the perspective of the child or the horse. Namely, the relations “between parents and children, women and men, managers and employees” become smoother, their violence veiled, when the subjects understand what is expected of them and comply in silence, preferably with a smile, even gratitude.

In this narrative, contradictions that challenge the concept of “democracy” appear to get resolved when the concept of egalitarianism is substituted with the concept of “difference”: humans cannot *overtly* abuse humans because, today, they are considered the same. However, if we operate from the premise that those who have been rendered socially, physically and materially weak depend on the powerful people’s charity to exploit their weakness, that they need the powerful people’s permission to exist, then there is flexibility in where the borders between the groups can be drawn and how the abused can be educated to believe that they are rendered nobler if they learn the language of obedience and servitude. In this way, their relationship will be filled with joy — only half a decade ago, this contention of sameness of all humans was still contestable. The construct of “difference” provides the platform for all forms of exploitation, discrimination, slavery and extermination: their faith is different, their tails are longer, their skulls are wider, their brains are smaller, their stature shorter, these have hooves, those have a skin colour different from what Jesus supposedly had, the feathers on their heads are not hats, the food they eat is not *kosher* or *halal*, ad infinitum.

But whereas the differences between the sexes, races, and social classes in those older forms of society were only purportedly based in nature, the differences between trainers and their subjects are natural differences between animal kinds endowed with different powers and capacities. The good trainer is the one who appreciates these differences, who both understands and respects the specific nature of the animal....

In a reworking of the story of our expulsion from paradise, [Hearne] suggests that our fallen relation to animals is one in which a gap has opened up between “the ability to command and the full acknowledgement of the personhood of the being so commanded” (47). Good training establishes a form of language that closes that gap, which is another way of saying that it enables a form of interaction that enhances the power and the feeling of power of both horse and rider. (ibid.: 97)

In other words, the text echoes Machiavelli's (1981) advice in *The Prince* that a good and responsible tyrant is the one who lets his sheeple indulge in the illusion that they are safe and well in his claws. According to Patton, since animals are different from each other — for example, some can be forced to jump, while others can be forced to plough or run fast — and are “naturally” different from humans, a good master understands these differences, that is, he identifies them and devises a language to fit the abilities of the specific subjects of dressage to extract the maximum for the standards that the domesticator has set for the animals. The grammar of freedom that the animal communicates at the beginning of this relationship, when she kicks and neighs and attempts to throw off and even kill the rider as he insists on breaking the horse, is once again conveniently left out of this narrative, and the power hierarchy remains anthropocentric and intact.

Domestication thus entails teaching a person knowledge that is not available in wilderness. In the wild, a person is beautiful because she feels alive amongst life in a community of human and nonhuman people and plants, and she learns from childhood how to guard the balance and diversity of that community to ensure that life goes on. Instead of inhabiting the abstract, yet regimented by civilization dimension of time, a wild person learns to respect seasons: today I eat, tomorrow it is the raven's turn, then the hare's and then the wolf's.⁵ In civilization, only those who have power and ownership “rights” over “real” estate and over living and nonliving resources are the ones who eat. In other words, there are those who consume and control, and there are those who are “legally” denied access to basic necessities, that is, the majority of human and nonhuman “resources” who are excluded from this system of distribution of symbolic and material capital and resources, because they themselves constitute those very resources that are “known” to exist to be consumed. Hence, cows, chickens and pigs are incarcerated in concentration camps and locked in stalls for slaughter; human resources are used and discarded; soldiers are shipped off to kill and be killed; and the shareholders hold shares of people, modes of production, products, markets, governments and their representatives. The list goes on.

In this light, the wild person knows the self in relationship to a world that exists for its own purpose, while the civilized knows the self as master of a world to be conquered, modified, tamed, educated and possessed even when that self is inscribed into a specific niche in the food chain and gets itself consumed as well. Hence, instead of focusing on symbiotic relationships, the civilized follow a parasitic paradigm with dire repercussions not only for the way people think of themselves and relate to the world, but also for how much or how little skill they are allowed to acquire and the amount and type of information about others they can obtain.

Symbiotic relationships stem from wild intelligence where each individual is part of a diverse yet interdependent group and thus knows how

to attune to the real, unrepresented and unmediated experiences of others always and necessarily in a new way. Evolution of both physiology and culture is therefore merely an expression of spontaneity, innovation and chaos — the components that ensure the stability of life. Intelligence in the wild requires that humans and nonhumans be able to assimilate and apply their knowledge in constantly changing new ways. Here, the ability to imagine what it is like to be the other or someone else — to empathize — plays a vital role in the understanding and the acquisition of real knowledge about the self and the world that has serious repercussions for personal and group viability.

Empathy, Co-operation and Mutual Aid from an Interspecies Perspective

Today, Ljuba and I have finally made it to Ka`ena Point State Park. The Farrington Highway was very different from the north shore with its rocky banks and tumultuous sea. We made several stops along the way to swim or walk or run around. At a certain point during our drive, I noticed a yellow tape cutting off a certain part of the beach from the road that extended for several miles. Police were patrolling the area and so I concluded that they must have been investigating a murder. Strange that the tape went on for miles and there seemed to be a lot of campers under the palm trees. We spent a lovely day at the park and as we were heading back, I thought it was strange that the same place was still cordoned off. I noticed whole families walking about their business. There were children playing. Their mothers were cooking in the tight spaces between the tents and cardboard dwellings. People in general went about their business. I got interested and so we stopped to see what was going on. This was a huge shantytown inhabited by native Hawaiians forced to live on a tiny strip of a beach in highly cramped conditions, while the rest of the island remained occupied by military, the rich folk from the mainland and farming corporations that exported everything that was grown there. Any papayas, coconuts, avocados or other tropical food that we could find on the island was very expensive and was imported from Mexico, Guatemala or other places.

As always, I was deeply saddened to see yet another blatant case of oppression, where the dispossessed have been criminalized, and took out my camera to photograph the camp from outside the tape.

"No," said Ljuba, who was nine years old at the time.

"Why not?" I asked. "I'd like to post it on my blog to let people know that they should do something about it."

"Precisely," said my daughter. "You'll post it in your blog, but people already know about these things. Look, they even have the cops here. If people cared, they would have already done something about it. If I lived here, I would not want you to come and take pictures of me like this and put them on your blog. Because I know these photos wouldn't do anything except make people despise me. It is not that people don't know. It is that they don't care."

With tears in my eyes, I put the camera away. If a 9-year-old can already figure out how to know, why is our world in such pain? But then, she never went to school. My unschooled child is a life learner.

Kailua, Hawaii, Thursday, January 15, 2009

A similar episode occurred six weeks later, when we were driving back from Big Rapids, Michigan, to Montreal. Ljuba had fallen in love with Christopher Paul Curtis' books. She has finished reading *Bud, Not Buddy* on the train from Portland, Oregon, to Big Rapids. The book is set in Flint, Michigan, the author's hometown. Ljuba consulted the map and figured out that Flint is close to where we were visiting, so she asked me to make a stop there on the way home to take pictures to remember. It was the beginning of March. With all I have seen in America, I have never seen a town like this. Cold wind, ice and snow. Old houses with either boarded windows and doors or none at all. Children climbing in through them. Old people using broomsticks to sweep the sidewalks and streets in -20° Celsius. Ljuba had tears in her eyes. "You know, Mama, *The Watsons* were simply funny. *Bud, Not Buddy* was funny but also sad. I cried so much at the end. But this is even worse. How can people live in other places and not do anything to help these people? I don't want any pictures. I will always remember it like this, but I hope very much that Flint will change. I would do anything for it to change." (Travel journal, North America, 2009)

On revisiting these journal entries, I was struck by how empathy and representation do not go together. My child has reacted strongly, both times, against taking pictures, invoking memory instead: I shall always remember.

The world of chaos is a world of evolution by means of co-operation and mutual aid as Peter Kropotkin's study of life in the Siberian wilderness demonstrates. If even in the harshest of climates, the principle of sympathy governed intra- and interspecies relationships, then it should be even more pronounced in favourable climatic conditions where competition is nonsensical; for why would beings bother to compete if their environment is bustling with life? In this sense, civilization itself is nonsensical. In *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, Kropotkin describes how

the first thing which strikes us is the overwhelming numerical predominance of social species over those few carnivores which do not associate. The plateaus, the Alpine tracts, and the Steppes of the Old and New World are stocked with herds of deer, antelopes, gazelles, fallow deer, buffaloes, wild goats and sheep, all of which are sociable animals. When the Europeans came to settle in America, they found it so densely peopled with buffaloes, that pioneers had to stop their advance when a column of migrating buffaloes came to cross the route they followed; the march past of the dense column lasting sometimes for two and three days. And when the Russians took possession of Siberia they found it so densely peopled with deer, antelopes, squirrels, and other sociable animals, that the very conquest of Siberia was nothing but a hunting expedition which lasted for two hundred years; while the grass plains of Eastern Africa are still covered with herds composed of zebra, the hartebeest, and other antelopes.

Not long ago the small streams of Northern America and Northern Siberia were peopled with colonies of beavers, and up to the seventeenth century, like colonies swarmed in Northern Russia. The flat lands of the four great continents are still covered with countless colonies of mice, ground-squirrels, marmots, and other rodents. In the lower latitudes of Asia and Africa the forests are still the abode of numerous families of elephants, rhinoceroses, and numberless societies of monkeys. In the far north the reindeer aggregate in numberless herds; while still further north we find the herds of the musk-oxen and numberless bands of polar foxes. The coasts of the ocean are enlivened by flocks of seals and morses; its waters, by shoals of sociable cetaceans; and even in the depths of the great plateau of Central Asia we find herds of wild horses, wild donkeys, wild camels, and wild sheep. All these mammals live in societies and nations sometimes numbering hundreds of thousands of individuals, although now, after three centuries of gunpowder civilization, we find but the débris of the immense aggregations of old. How trifling, in comparison with them, are the numbers of the carnivores! And how false, therefore, is the view of those who speak of the animal world as if nothing were to be seen in it but lions and hyenas plunging their bleeding teeth into the flesh of their victims! One might as well imagine that the whole of human life is nothing but a succession of war massacres.

Association and mutual aid are the rule with mammals. We find social habits even among the carnivores, and we can only name the cat tribe (lions, tigers, leopards, etc.) as a division the members of which decidedly prefer isolation to society, and are but seldom met with even in small groups. And yet, even among lions "this is a very common practice to hunt in company." (Kropotkin 2006: 31–33)

Kropotkin was writing more than a century ago and since then the devastation at the hands of civilized humans waging war against wilderness has only aggravated. He provides detailed lists of exterminated animals, birds, insects and plants and then proceeds to discuss the cruelty with which the civilized European invaders have treated Indigenous people around the world.

It is known that when Europeans settled in their territory and destroyed deer, the Bushmen began stealing the settlers' cattle, whereupon a war of extermination, too horrible to be related here, was waged against them. Five hundred Bushmen were slaughtered in 1774, three thousand in 1808 and 1809 by the Farmers' Alliance, and so on. They were poisoned like rats, killed by hunters lying in ambush before the carcass of some animal, killed wherever met with. So that our knowledge of the Bushmen, being chiefly borrowed from those same people who exterminated them, is necessarily limited. But still we know that when the Europeans came, the Bushmen lived in small tribes (or clans), sometimes federated together; that they used to hunt in common, and divided the spoil without quarrelling; that they never abandoned their wounded, and displayed strong affection to their comrades. Lichtenstein has a most touching story about a Bushman, nearly drowned in a river, who was rescued by his companions. They took off their furs to cover him, and shivered themselves; they dried him, rubbed him before the fire, and smeared his body with warm grease till they brought him back to life. And when the Bushmen found, in Johan van der Walt, a man who treated them well, they expressed their thankfulness by a most touching attachment to that man. Burchell and Moffat both represent them as goodhearted, disinterested, true to their promises, and grateful, all qualities which could develop only by being practised within the tribe. As to their love to children, it is sufficient to say that when a European wished to secure a Bushman woman as a slave, he stole her child: the mother was sure to come into slavery to share the fate of her child. (ibid.: 72-73)

As Kropotkin points out, not only do the civilized sow great sorrow upon the world, they also dismiss the self-knowledge of the victims they rape and kill and instead impose their own (un)knowledge, concocted by means of abstraction, apathy and alienation, as "historical accounts." Not only has Kropotkin challenged the logic of civilized relationships and the Darwinian narrative — a logic leading directly to eugenics and holocausts — but he also questioned the political repercussions of that narrative in which (mis)interpretation of the data becomes the main driving force in the construction of anthropogenic reality and civilized anthropology. Wilderness, Kropotkin says, is the source of morality, knowledge and life. Civilization stems from the

eugenicist logic of extermination of the “other” as entity and perspective. Extermination can take place only in the absence of empathy, intelligence and morality. Among his endless lists of field observations and library research on empathy, Peter Kropotkin cites Goethe:

The importance of the Mutual Aid factor — “if its generality could only be demonstrated” — did not escape the naturalist’s genius so manifest in Goethe. When Eckermann told once to Goethe — it was in 1827 — that two little wren-fledglings, which had run away from him, were found by him next day in the nest of robin redbreasts (Rothkehlchen), which fed the little ones, together with their own youngsters, Goethe grew quite excited about this fact. He saw in it a confirmation of his pantheistic views, and said: — “If it be true that this feeding of a stranger goes through all Nature as something having the character of a general law — then many an enigma would be solved.” He returned to this matter on the next day, and most earnestly entreated Eckermann (who was, as is known, a zoologist) to make a special study of the subject, adding that he would surely come “to quite invaluable treasures of results.”⁶

Recent studies from ethology confirm Kropotkin’s theory on mutual aid and on the importance of empathy for life. For example, in 1959, psychologist Russell Church published a paper titled: “Emotional reactions of rats to the pain of others.” In his study, Church observed that rats refused to press the lever to release food if that action caused an electric shock to another rat. Moreover, they displayed concern for the screaming person. Church’s observations were followed up by other studies around the world. For instance, Rutte and Taborsky (2007) confirmed that co-operation between rats was extended regardless of whether the fellow rat was an acquaintance, a concept known as “generalized reciprocity.” Bekoff and Pierce express this observation as follows:

rats exhibit what is called “generalized reciprocity” — they generously help an unknown rat obtain food if they themselves have benefited from the kindness of a stranger. Continued research on rat sociality may force us to revise our generally dismissive and disgusted attitude toward these animals. (Bekoff and Pierce 2009: 21)

Even though prior acquaintance is not important for a rat to be kind, the authors name one factor that increased the chances for co-operation, namely, they observe that there was more compassion from the part of those rats who had previously experienced an act of kindness by another random rat. If we extend this observation to social interactions between humans, this factor is of great relevance to the educational methods of civilized hu-

man and nonhuman children, for civilized schooling itself perpetuates the experience of cruelty, competition and mistrust dulling the expression of the natural inclination towards empathic relationships and co-operation. Drawing its data and support from schooled hierarchies, civilized humans then draw the conclusion that more control is needed, a panopticon that would observe children and modify their wild essence, the fear of which would be internalized by the victims. Incorporating this fear ultimately eradicates wildness from their being and creates the perfect homogeneity, a replica of the obedient, domesticated slave that can be differentiated only by a serial number, DNA, or other technological means used in differentiation, categorization and control.

In fact, a recent study conducted by researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, the University of Toronto, and the University of California, Berkeley, confirms that the more a person enjoys social and economic power, the more she loses empathic ability and, with it, the basic understanding of what another person feels and experiences. The authors observe that

individuals of a lower social class are more empathically accurate in judging the emotions of other people. In three studies, lower-class individuals (compared with upper-class individuals) received higher scores on a test of empathic accuracy (Study 1), judged the emotions of an interaction partner more accurately (Study 2), and made more accurate inferences about emotion from static images of muscle movements in the eyes (Study 3). (Kraus et al. 2010)

This study confirms the thesis that community, empathy and compassion are impossible in the condition of hierarchy, and needless to say, civilization is by its very nature necessarily stratified. The study points to the main element that helps people oppress other human and nonhuman people: apathy, or the lack of compassion. In other words, not only do empathy and compassion decrease higher up the human hierarchy, it actually disappears across the gulf that separates species, races and age groups, and instead, as the reasoning in Patton's essay demonstrates, cruelty towards the victims of oppression becomes institutionalized as legitimate treatment that is depicted in civilized epistemology as having been chosen and desired by the victims themselves. Cruelty and apathy become invisible in the legitimate, civilized discourse.

In their book entitled *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals*, Bekoff and Pierce (2009) confirm that co-operation and empathy between animals of different species is the prevalent choice for relating to others. Often friendship extends across species including between predators and prey. These observations come from a range of perspectives and disciplines, including biology, ethology, zoology and human animal philosophy. Bekoff and Pierce

list hyenas, elephants and mice, among numerous other animals who surprise civilized humans with their high moral standards and ethics.

One of the classic studies on altruism comes from Gerry Wilkinson's work on bats. Vampire bats who are successful in foraging for blood that they drink from livestock will share their meal with bats who aren't successful. And they're more likely to share blood with those bats who previously shared blood with them. In a recent piece of surprising research, rats appear to exhibit generalized reciprocity; they help an unknown rat obtain food if they themselves have been helped by a stranger. (Bekoff and Pierce 2009: 7)

Another illustration is the *Lycaon pictus*, or the African wild dog, also known as the African hunting dog, the spotted dog, or the *mbwa mwinu* in Swahili. These dogs share the kill, for which they suffer a lengthy and arduous hunt, with the wounded mates scattered along the hunting path, and the elderly, the mothers and the cubs left behind in the den. Among endless examples, Kurtén and Gould (1995) note that the Neanderthals also took care of their elderly and wounded.

In the sphere of animal parenting culture, Boesch et al. document an equal proportion of male and female Tai Forest chimpanzees engaged in the extremely time-consuming practice of adopting unrelated orphans. The years of care that the adoptive fathers and mothers provide to these children disprove the scientific narrative that interprets altruism as driven by egotistical interests such as reproductive strategies for the success of one's own semen and eggs or other forms of wealth. Here, Boesch et al. pose a critical question:

In strong contrast to these studies with captive chimpanzees, consistent observations of potentially altruistic behaviors in wild chimpanzees have been reported from different populations in such different domains as food sharing, regular use of coalitions, and cooperative hunting and border patrolling. ... The striking differences between captive and wild populations beg the question of what socio-ecological factors favor the evolution of altruism within one species. (Boesch et al. 2010)

Nonetheless, in spite of the importance of the question itself, the mathematical language that the authors use diverts them from the real problem of domestication, which, by its very nature, is not about sharing, but about dominance, exploitation and confiscation of food. Hence, an attempt to calculate the benefits of altruism becomes an exercise in an attempt to merge oxymorons into a meaningful story, a task doomed to failure. For instance, the authors attribute the lack of sharing among captive chimpanzees to the "availability of food," which is false. Food is not "available" in captivity. The

whole concept of captivity entails the denial of the freedom to move, eat, love and live as one pleases.

Following Hamilton's rule, we should expect more altruistic behavior in populations of individuals as the benefit becomes relatively larger than the cost. Thus, the proposed absence of altruistic food sharing in captive animals might be expected due to the well-fed state of all individuals under such conditions. (ibid.)

Captivity is civilization and, regardless of the species, civilization divides and rules. Food is not available in the conditions of incarceration. Food is rationed and used as a tool of coercion and dominance, as is the confining space itself, which minimizes movement and happiness. The whole point of domestication is for the domesticator to lock away food, to starve out and kill those designated as competitors, parasites and enemies as well as to consume and control resources. The domesticator therefore saves food, slaves, pets, research material, or anyone or anything whose destruction is not in the civilized human's interests and does away with the rest. In this respect, the famous animal psychologist and physiologist, Ivan Pavlov, known as the "father of the contemporary animal training techniques," only articulated the principle of "classical conditioning" that was discovered seventeen thousand years earlier.

Research in ethology and primatology confirms that in captivity, also known as conditions of extreme civilization, human animals and nonhumans alike display egocentric political ruses and calculations leading to organized violence. Jane Goodall's presence among the chimpanzees in the Gombe Stream area in Tanzania contributed to such behaviour. For decades, Goodall had observed that the chimpanzees were peaceful, caring and sharing (Goodall 1986). As it turns out, however, she was not simply "observing" the chimpanzees, but also feeding them and experimenting on them by sometimes locking up the food, which induced changes in their behaviour: they began to show signs of frustration, calculation and aggression.

After a few years, however, we realized that the feeding was having a marked effect on the behavior of the chimps. They were beginning to move about in large groups more often than they had ever done in the old days. Worst of all, the adult males were becoming increasingly aggressive. When we first offered the chimps bananas the males seldom fought over their food; they shared boxes. (Goodall 1988: 140-41)

Numerous primatologists have criticized Goodall's interference in the lives of the chimpanzees. Margaret Power (1996), specifically, condemns experimentation with food for its domesticating effect, for prior to the in-

trodition of Goodall's experimentation with food, these chimps had been noted for their peaceful relationships and kindness. After decades of feeding them coupled with the general spread of civilization and agriculture causing massive deforestation, by the mid-1980s, the chimpanzees began to exhibit the same social behaviour as civilized humans: they became greedy, political or cunning, and violent.

Concurrently with Goodall, a Japanese group of primatologists, led by Kinji Imanishi, was studying a different chimpanzee population in western Tanzania and Uganda. Like Goodall, the Japanese researchers also noticed that the chimpanzees, having been affected by their interactions with people and by people's encroachment upon their territory, began to wage war among the various groups (Matsuzawa and McGrew 2008). In their discussion of Imanishi's work, Matsuzawa and McGrew point to the Kropotkin perspective underlying Imanishi's approach that saw the world holistically with each species and every individual as parts of a whole. It is this perspective, they note, that led Imanishi to see the human, colonialist and civilized factors in this eruption of violence rather than an evolutionary selective strategy and genetic nature. In addition to the frustrations caused by someone else controlling access to food and space, William McGrew (1992 and 2004) condemns any civilized human involvement in the lives of animals for the endangerment that such interference poses to the animals. Among other dangers, the animals risk getting killed as "pests" by agriculturalist humans or hunters, since they get used to the presence of human observers, to their food and to their various cultural artefacts (McGrew 2004). For, regardless of their intent or their level of awareness, civilized humans pose the greatest threat to all human and nonhuman beings by the sheer drive of the narrative in which they are inscribed and in whose structure their interests remain vested.

In this respect, civilization operates with two hands: one manages the "resources" and geopolitics by expropriating food and land for the purposes of agriculture, mining and for whatever other civilized needs that satisfy human owners and consumers, while the other hand studies, observes, exchanges the food and produces the "knowledge" that confirms the system of civilized relationships. Working in synchrony, the two hands elicit civilized responses. In the case of the chimps, the outcome was human: an outbreak of bitter, premeditated and organized warfare. In other words, the chimps became human and could no longer relate to each other with empathy, intelligence and integrity.

This interrelationship between empathy, intelligence and life or the tight connection between apathy, symbolic thought, civilization, devastation and death is most cogently explored in Philip K. Dick's science fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Even though this is a work of fiction, it depicts today's reality with an eerie ethnographic accuracy. The main point of the novel is the devolution of humans into machines as entities created to fulfil

their creator's purpose without the interference of empathy, that is, a devolution into the perfectly civilized being designed to serve. In the novel, humans and machines share the ability to dream for themselves from an egocentric point of view. They dream of a better life, of self-realization and survival. Dreaming renders both species sentient and thereby erases the borders between the organic and inorganic. However, the main problem resides in the fact that, in spite of the acute sense of sentience and solidarity among themselves, the androids lack cross-species empathy. They would not hesitate to kill a spider, even if it were the last spider on earth, simply because they are curious to see if it can live without legs. Without reservation, they kill a living goat in order to enact revenge against a human for having betrayed their expectations to be loved. The androids do not pause to ponder whether the goat and the spider, like themselves, have dreams, belong to a community of solidarity that will miss them and mourn their death, or even whether they deserve to be killed.

In turn, humans have come to strongly resemble these androids by losing the ability to empathize with the other's dreams and pain: in the manner of bounty hunters, they too can easily kill the androids striving to realize themselves, as well as human and nonhuman animals, simply for greed or sport. The book depicts this loss of appreciation for the dream of the other and the loss of the ability to feel the other's pain as one of the main causes of the impending extinction of life on earth. This reflects accurately today's condition on earth in the age of the Holocene extinction, which has been impelled by human civilization.⁷ For instance, "according to calculations by Paul MacCready (1999), at the dawn of human agriculture 10,000 years ago, the worldwide human population plus their livestock and pets was ~0.1% of the terrestrial vertebrate biomass. Today, he calculates, it is 98%" (Dennett 2009).

Having eradicated empathy, humans and androids declare God, the embodiment of life force known as Mercer, dead. As he announces that God is dead, Nietzsche's reflection on the civilized human attempt to shed the last remnants of morality in Dick's novel relates specifically to the ability to empathize, which the book tells us constitutes the very principle of life, one that guides us through the mesh of dreams cherishing the life of each and everyone. In this respect, I see God or Mercer as wild purpose for the existence of life for its own sake, outside of the realm of human control. By domesticating this wild purpose, humans destroy wilderness and declare it dead thereby bringing an end to life known as the Holocene age of death.

But here is where this dark and tragic book offers a solution. As the announcer on TV delivers this news, Mercer appears before the only enlightened person in the narrative, John Isidore, who is an idiot according to the IQ testing standards of that society.⁸ This force of life appears before Isidore at a specific moment when he weeps with his whole body and soul over the

pain of the tiny spider, tortured by the androids, who themselves had been tortured by humans. Because Isidore feels pain for the pain of the spider, Mercer brings the spider back to life.

Dick's novel thus identifies a crucial link between empathy and intelligence and the civilized propensity for apathetic and cruel ignorance. It reveals how civilization subverts wild meaning; it calls life death, it names torture and suffering as love and joy, and thus hinders the civilized from experiencing the epiphany that only an "idiot" like Isidore can attain, since he is unable to learn the disjointed and perverse meaning of civilization. Unlike Donna Haraway's cyborg who is expected to be saved by its inability to remember the wild earth, it is precisely the opposite that saves us from doom in Dick's novel. The only way to bring life back is to remember the paradise lost, feel its pain, and reach out to life across the civilized borders of categorization, alienation, amnesia and apathy. Isidore does not share domesticated meaning and is marginalized in the civilized hierarchy of unknowledge, his true knowledge devalued and silenced as he gets "scientifically" categorized as "idiot" while unknowledge and the forces that destroy life are called "intelligence."

Everyone knows that intelligence is important for life and so the civilized erroneously agree to have their children spend years and decades in schools, isolated from the world and rendered incompetent in life. Nonetheless, even if our ability to empathize has atrophied and our intelligence has significantly diminished, the novel tells us we could still overcome this alienation if we could only remember how to know the world by tuning personally to the sentience of others, which cannot be achieved through representation, for unmediated, empathy is always about the raw — not abstract — understanding of who the other is.

Throughout the ages, voices of dissent continued to challenge the inherently discriminating and violent ontological basis of civilization. One such voice was Jeremy Bentham's, whose reasoning provides a vital illustration of how we can know the other by being considerate for her well-being. Understanding the other's experience entails an adjustment of one's actions and livelihood if those are implicated in the suffering of others. Bentham deliberates on whether the humanity of a person is a sufficient marker of distinction for guaranteeing protection from acts of cruelty while granting humans the right to commit acts of cruelty against those who are denied personhood. Should not sentience, or the ability to feel pain, be enough reason to protect human and nonhuman persons from getting tortured, murdered, exploited and, I would add, eaten?

If the being killed were all, there is very good reason why we should be suffered to kill such as molest us: we should be the worse for their living, and they are never the worse for being dead. But is there any reason why we should be suffered to torment them? Not any that

I can see. Are there any why we should *not* be suffered to torment them? Yes, several. The day has been, I grieve to say in many places it is not yet past, in which the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, have been treated by the law exactly upon the same footing as, in England for example, the inferior races of animals are still. The day *may* come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withheld from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the *os sacrum*, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or, perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*? (Bentham 1907: Chapter XVII)

To conceive a question like this, one must first be able to imagine the other's experience and hear her, which cannot happen through abstraction and representation. The more we are taught to know the world through perverted words and formulae, the dumber we grow, for intelligence only devolves in artificial "educational" settings, where the civilized are taught to listen to the voices representing their needs and woes. In this way, the civilized are taught how to not hear the other, but overwrite her voice with civilized generalizations. Physiologist Alexei Ukhtomsky (Nikitina 1998) attributes this deafness to the double. We know the other through dialogue, Ukhtomsky says, because dialogue entails hearing one's interlocutors. However, we are raised to replace the other with what we have been conditioned to hear. Ukhtomsky borrowed Dostoevsky's term for this: "the double." Only after freeing ourselves from this double can we be open to the experience, needs and desires of our interlocutors. This understanding enables us to overcome our ontological definitions and their limitations, thereby broadening our knowledge and enhancing our viability. Expanding the scope of our interactions with wildness through empathic communication erases the borders between the categories of whom we accept as our interlocutors thereby freeing us from the distinctions that trap us into the now global racist, sexist and speciesist labour camp.

In this sense, Bentham's reasoning on cruelty and humanity exposes the civilized problem for what it is: a system of knowledge that has been con-

structured on the basis of categorization with random criteria for the purpose of classification and discrimination. Moreover, it is a system of knowledge with serious gaps in its argument for abuse (domestication, slaughterhouse and consumption, among other forms of exploitation) founded on the double standards of humanism, which Bentham identifies in his question: are “we” to cause suffering to the beings that suffer and justify this because “they” speak a different language, or supposedly, to our anthropocentric ear, speak no language at all? Is this definition of the Other sufficient to grant us the permission to ignore her pain — if not participate in causing it — and overwrite it with a narrative that aestheticizes suffering by calling the scream of pain song, *tableau*, or drama?

Thus anticipating the work of ethologists in Western epistemology that came two hundred years after his time — this knowledge had always been available to nondomesticated peoples — Bentham reveals the bigotry of the civilized classification system and challenges the fundamental position that defines the human as a legal agent distinct from the objectified resource, whose voice civilization constructs as illegitimate and whose purpose it claims is to serve the human’s whims.

Not only does Bentham’s formulation question humanism as an institution with its legal apparatus protecting and justifying itself, it also challenges the concept of “human rights” whose underlying assumption holds that certain characteristics — attributed exclusively to humans — should protect individuals and groups from abuse. The characteristics are reason, sentience and agency, and they grant humans the right and moral justification to torture, exploit and murder “nonhumans” while protecting the “humans” with “human rights” from the same abuse they inflict on others. In other words, the category of “human rights” is based on guaranteeing safety, agency and ownership to one group of living beings and the discrimination and oppression of those who are denied the right to be identified as human.⁹

As Bentham observes, until recently, human people who did not possess property or had a skin colour that was not in favour at the time were legitimately marginalized, tortured and oppressed. This unknowledge, backed by the human law, institutionalizes unequal relations of power and legitimizes the purposeful infliction of pain, even though various legislatures include clauses for the “duty to rescue.” Still, regardless of the legal concept of the “duty to rescue,” civilized society prosecutes the activists who rescue animals even when they make a conscious effort not to harm anyone’s life in the process. Even minimal damage to the technology used in the torture of animals is punishable, because nonsentient property is valued more than the suffering of sentient beings. Persecuted animal liberation activists receive sentences equivalent to manslaughter, terrorism and murder.¹⁰

Bentham’s articulation of the problem leaves no room for compromise between the ontologies of domestication and wildness. He appeals to ethics,

empathy and knowledge rather than to legal discourse and civilized grammar, formulating his critique in such a way that it leaves only three possible responses for a person who understands that, inevitably, all civilized actions and livelihoods are implicated in the suffering of others: (1) stop doing what causes others to suffer; (2) consciously or not, justify cruelty and apathy by claiming, or even believing in that suffering is natural and that "I" have nothing to do with other human or animal people's pain; (3) simply deny that they are suffering and devise a system of silencing and dismissal of expressed pain as irrelevant, nonexistent or a lie.

Numerous cases in the history of civilization demonstrate that when driven by empathy, even the most civilized people in positions of power are capable of choosing the first option — they renounce their privilege to oppress and join the ranks of the oppressed: Catholic workers; Earth Liberation Front (ELF); Animal Liberation Front (ALF); Peter Kropotkin, who renounced his title of prince; William King, the Presbyterian minister who funded the Elgin freed slave settlement of Buxton, Ontario; many of the people who helped run the Underground Railroad, among many others. These people sought to build intelligent communities based on diversity.

The other options of dealing with others' pain, namely dismissing and ignoring it, require ignorance and apathy. These qualities are acquired by intensive training and years of education guided by the Darwinian narrative of evolution, supported by religious authorities — regardless of whether these are monotheistic or polytheistic faiths — and always and necessarily imposed by means of violence. Ignorance and apathy constitute valuable tools for the confusion of concepts and substitution of meaning.

Children Do Not Dream of Carrots and Sticks

Even though the department that produces "knowledge" in the civilized context appears to be severed from the one responsible for the production of law, the two, in fact, work hand-in-hand to preserve the categories of right and wrong, legal and criminal, healthy and ill, deserving and undeserving. Hence, it is not a coincidence that the term discipline applies to punishment/incarceration and to the scientific domains of knowledge thus revealing the tight relationship between the two institutions of control. For, one institution legitimizes the infliction of pain, while the other calls it love.

For example, Section 43 of the Canadian *Criminal Code*, commonly known as the "spanking law," reveals that "human" is a civilized construct contingent on violence and the need to change the natural behaviour of children.

On 30 January 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada released its decision in the case of *Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law v. Canada (Attorney General)*. The issue was whether s. 43 is unconstitutional. Six of nine justices concluded that the

provision does not violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as it does not infringe a child's rights to security of the person or a child's right to equality, and it does not constitute cruel and unusual treatment or punishment. Three justices dissented in three different respects. (Barnett 2008)

The spanking law reads as follows:

Every schoolteacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances.

Barnett continues:

The defence of reasonable correction appeared in Canada's first *Criminal Code* in 1892. The content has remained virtually unchanged since that time, with the exception of the removal of masters and apprentices from among the relationships covered by the defence.... If s. 43 were repealed, the general assault provisions of the *Criminal Code* would apply to a parent, teacher or guardian who uses force against a child without the latter's consent. A statutory defence based on "reasonable correction" would no longer be available. Because s. 265 of the *Criminal Code* prohibits the non-consensual application of force and s. 279 prohibits forcible confinement of another person without lawful authority, there is concern that the abolition of the defence in s. 43 would criminalize parental conduct short of what is usually considered corporal punishment, such as restraining an uncooperative child in a car seat or physically putting a child to bed. (ibid.)

My unschooled child's reaction to this law reveals that the category "human" is provisional and conditional; people are not born "human," they are born wild and have to be educated, "corrected" and forced to become civilized apes who accept pain and suffering as a given.

Sasha, my husband, and I have been following this debate for several months with dismay that it would even be considered reasonable to apply any kind of force to submit somebody who is weaker to discipline. Having embraced the principles of child-led education, commonly referred to as unschooling and attachment parenting, we have always been against any form of coercion. I was sure that the section would be repealed; Sasha was teasing me that it would become stricter. I came home late from the library that day, on January 30, 2004, and Sasha greeted me sarcastically, "Congratulations! The law upholds the

right of parents, custodians and teachers to beat, confine and restrain anybody between the ages of two and sixteen years."

"No!" I exclaimed and followed in his spirit of humour — laughter is often the reaction of despair. "Why not after sixteen? If beat we must, why discriminate?"

"Oh yeah, do you think you'd recognize your mug after you've spanked a sixteen year old?" Sasha joked, "What I don't understand is why not before two?"

I enlightened him that "before two they might not be fully aware of the injustice, also do it while they can't reach the nose." We continued the discussion in that vein for a while, when we noticed that our 4-year-old, Ljuba, was scurrying about the apartment, extremely focused and frowning, packing a little *Pippi Longstocking* suitcase with her favourite clothes and things.

"What's wrong, Ljubochka?" I asked.

She hit me.

She had never done that before. We have never applied force. Once, a relative dared use the argument "I got you the little bag you wanted and now you don't want me to put my almond milk into your shopping cart" and got an unforgettable tirade from me, that this constitutes coercion; that Ljuba does not owe anybody anything; that she should want to share when she wants to and not because somebody got her something; that coercion was tantamount to violence, and and and ... Relatives and friends quickly learned not to use the standard logic of "you should" and "because" with our child.

And now my child hit me.

"Your law says you can beat me," she said, without stopping to fidget about the apartment like a squirrel in search of nuts.

"Ljubochka, darling, you know that we're against this law. We'll never ever hit you and will never ever leave you with anyone who we suspect might do such a thing. You know we'll always protect you."

"Yes, I know that. But you have the right to hit me. It's okay for you to hit me," said my 4-year-old child, and revealed to me that obtaining the right to use violence and coercion, even when we did not intend to use it, was violence in its own right.

From that day on, she would hit us for many months to come. And we agreed to endure her wrath at the violation of children's dignity by the existence of the right to hit someone younger and weaker than ourselves.

We embraced her indignation with compassion and she responded by accepting us with our right for violence. And slowly, as we communicated to her that we abandoned this right, that we had never subscribed to it in the first place, this was put behind us and finally stopped.

Montreal, January 30, 2004, edited on January 15, 2005

Of course, it may be argued that not all countries uphold overt punishment, and that some choose to replace the whip with grades and other emotional and psychological tactics of coercion. Nonetheless, the underlying basis of these pedagogical practices enforces the idea that children need to be forced to act, live and feel differently from how they are naturally inclined to behave. One might also say that even when physical punishment is an integral part of a culture, not all children respond to this manifestation of civilized relations in Ljuba's manner. The argument ends there precisely because not all children live in environments that encourage them to resist domestication, and soon enough pedagogy proves itself right as it succeeds to instil the fear of pain and humiliation, or of being denied access to shelter, space and food. Ultimately, pedagogy and domestication are about capital punishment, for everyone knows that underneath the "carrot and the whip" method lies the threat of starvation that ensures that people learn by heart that they do *not know* and *cannot learn by themselves* how to live in this world.

In contrast, noncivilized (wild) societies, such as the Semai, do not impose restrictions or any form of psychological, moral or physical punishment on children. They allow children to learn simply by living and enjoying the safety of the unconditional love that the community provides. Here, the basic premise is that children and adults *can know* by themselves how to live well in the world. In wild ontology, the very notion of forcing children to do anything is absent. Semai children do not play violent or competitive games, and the fact that such societies still exist today demonstrates that violence is neither indispensable for survival nor an intrinsic feature of life. Moreover, since there is a direct correlation between wilderness, interspecies community, diversity and intelligence, the Semai see the consumption of animals whom they have raised as cannibalism, that is, the eating of one's own kin. These people lead vibrant lives *without* a structure of leaders or figures of authority at the top, with the "resources" at the bottom, and are most noted for the fact that they *never* punish their children. These children grow into responsible members of the world community precisely because their caregivers follow the principles that ban all forms of punishment and cruelty against children as well as the animals they raise (Dentan 1968).

In the end, nowhere in the wild do we see parents developing painful teaching techniques intended to force children to endure suffering in the name of love, care or learning. Animal children emulate adult behaviour in order to live well in a world that remains balanced and is healthy because they so desire and not because somebody told them so. The scenario of someone instructing another person to change her behaviour and relationships can occur only in a setting of hierarchy and domestication where the living being's striving for harmony is changed to docility and obedience, and where instinct and purpose have to be tamed and forced into abstract categories that have nothing to do with the tamed person herself so as to fit her into the tamer's purpose.

My daughter's response to the "spanking law" has taught me that the very threat of violence in itself creates a situation of violence, while having the right to use violence creates the experience of being violated even when violence itself has not been actively applied. Whether the threat of punishment actually deters people from committing "crime" is much debated. But what the above example reveals is that the institutionalized possibility of violence — be it through grades, spanking, getting sent outside or locked inside, the withholding of candy or retraction of scholarships, the promise of future joblessness, homelessness and starvation or whatever other form of punishment — paves for a permanent state of violence cemented into the culture of civilized education and exercised in "correctional" facilities (preschools, schools, universities) by certified tyrants called experts. These experts "cure" and "correct" children's wilderness by convincing them that they will die if they do not learn how to be civilized, but if they do everything right, then one day they will graduate to the human status, even if merely to become a "human resource."

In this respect, punishment is a method of modification of nonhuman and human animal behaviour either by inflicting physical or emotional pain or by appealing to their fears of pain and death and threatening their well-being, even life itself. Namely, in order to civilize a person, the pedagogue needs to intentionally create the logic of endangerment, an intention that is absent in the wild, because even though beings learn from experience and it can occasionally be painful or frightful, that experience is never static. One needs to constantly improvise in the complexity and unpredictability of chaos where applying a standard rule cut to fit only static, inorganic, simplified programmes can prove fatal. *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, edited by Flew, defines "punishment" as follows:

The word in its full and central sense may be defined as the intentional infliction by some authority upon an offender, of some penalty intended to be disagreeable, for some offence against rules authorized by that authority. The references to intention and to an authority are both essential....

What is philosophically controversial is not so much the definition of the word "punishment" but the justification of the institution. Should it be in terms of deterrence, retribution, reparation, or reform? (Flew 1984: 293)

Even if Flew does not question the definition of punishment and believes that the institution, whose justification he admits to be controversial, is related neither to the definition nor to the authority that is "essential," nonetheless, he identifies the ontological problem of the institution itself: what is the foundation of its existence? Which leads to the question: what is the knowledge that it takes for granted about permanence and temporariness of acts, motivations

and desires? How do we identify authority in this system of relations and why is this authority above the “normal” and the “deviant”? Finally, he identifies the link between the goal to “reform” individuals according to the definitions of this “authority” and the intentional infliction of pain.

In contrast to the civilized and Commonwealth definition of crime, anarchist Errico Malatesta proposes an alternative definition:

Naturally the crimes we are talking about are anti-social acts. That is those which offend human feelings and which infringe the right of others to equality in freedom, and not the many actions which the penal code punishes simply because they offend against the privileges of the dominant classes.

Crime, in our opinion, is any action which tends to consciously increase human suffering, it is the violation of the right of all to equal freedom and to the greatest possible enjoyment of material and moral well-being. (Malatesta 1984)

Malatesta's definition of crime identifies the well-being of every *person* as the focal point in conceptualizing justice, society, nature and the world. From this perspective, the unintentional infliction of pain by the occupiers of Indigenous lands or the intentional infliction of pain by a parent or a judge issuing the verdict “guilty” equally constitute crime and the authority — required by Flew and exercised by those who subscribe to the civilized right to educate, correct, domesticate and consume the lives of others — is criminal.

Furthermore, the formulation of the punitive paradigm assumes that the adult knows the correct behaviour and has the right to define it, while the child's knowledge and humanity in this relationship are suspended until finally corrected. Here, the category “human” is provisional and conditional. People are not born “human”; they have to be forced, “corrected,” “educated” and bullied into *becoming* human. Ontologically, this means that without coercion and violence we are not human, which means two things: (1) that without legalized, premeditated violence we are animals; and (2) that animals do not coerce or use violence as an educational method, only those destined to become human do so. In other words, violence is a strictly civilized human property. This understanding leaves us either with fear and despair or hope and rebellion; for, it should either prompt us to agree to submit to the whipping hand of domestication or insist on dreaming savagely of the vast possibilities of wilderness and strive incessantly towards a return to our true animal essence.

Broken down to its basic components, the position for punishment postulates: (1) that children learn through conditioning and hence the intentional infliction of pain and reward can act as pedagogical stimuli; (2) that children have an innate side to their nature that, if left unconditioned and allowed to act according to its wishes, will ultimately wish “evil” (namely, be disobedient

to those higher in the hierarchy), while the right type of conditioning can reform the wicked streak; (3) that the wrongdoer is responsible for wrongdone acts and when exposed to pain, the decision to do wrong becomes a conscious choice, since punishment is supposed to teach and imprint on the memory that the given act is wrong because it causes pain to the doer and not to others — the question of sentience and empathy towards the victim not only comes secondary in this rationale, but calls for apathy which gives reason to the method of pain itself; and (4) that people should believe in the justice of the authority who has been designated to inflict pain as punishment and hence the question of credibility, definitions and authority are always present in this continually contested territory of humanism.

The opposite stance holding that children do not need punishment (such as the Semai) stems from the position: (1) that children and humans strive for harmony and goodness, that they are good deep inside and do not wish to harm anyone, especially not intentionally; (2) that the intentional infliction of pain teaches by example how to intentionally inflict pain and hence alienates people from each other and, in fact, is deleterious to relationships and community building; (3) that punishment teaches a person to surrender to the dictates of authority figures who inflict pain (hierarchical subordination) and whose interests become the guidelines for “right” and “wrong” instead of conscience, which atrophies in these conditions; (4) finally, that children are hard-wired to learn what is necessary for their well-being, for if other animals can, why would human animals be unable to?

The concept of punishment thus presupposes specific notions about the nature of the human animal, the nature of the child and the nature of the perceived act of deviance in relation to the constructed normalcy. In addition, punishment is based on the acceptance of the punisher’s superior position and knowledge, and the act of deviance is here understood from the perspective of those who are assigned a higher rank in the hierarchy. These basic premises in the rationale of punishment inform a variety of practices and shape the various contexts that determine the nature of the relationship, usually between unequals: between adults from unequal socio-economic groups, between adults and the elderly, between humans and animals, or between adults and children. Moreover, a relationship can be punishing even in the absence of corporal pain with devastating effects on the emotional and psychological health.

In his anthropological studies of psychiatric institutions, Gregory Bateson discusses the damage inflicted on mental and emotional health by the morally and emotionally punitive attitudes of parents and how the conflicting messages that they relay often lead to schizophrenic conditions in children. Double bind, Bateson says, arises when a person experiences several contradictory injunctions “enforced by punishments or signals that threaten survival” (Bateson 2000: 206), one of which prohibits the victim

from escaping the conflicting situation, which provokes symptoms of schizophrenia in the victim.

Civilization presents a perfect case of double bind, because people find themselves trapped in contradictory situations with conflicting injunctions in the form of prescriptions, taboos, laws, and contradictory messages in formal education and general upbringing. The hierarchy of predatory relationships, which is civilized “society,” constantly threatens its members with various forms of punishment, including the threat of starvation, which is perhaps its most successful method of coercion. This predatory hierarchy elevates “humanism” and human identity, yet, simultaneously, orders humans to constantly wage war against each other; it demands obedience, loyalty, hard labour and suffering, but concurrently punishes the obedient by reduced compensation, instead rewarding the one who leads, and not those who obey. That is, it rewards the powerful and the wealthy, the leaders and the bullies; it glorifies mercy and compassion, yet ruthlessly forces people to die in poverty, just as my 9-year-old daughter had already figured out and just as demonstrated by Bateson’s examples of contradicting parents driving their children to madness and despair from which the civilized victim or the schizophrenic child finds no exit.

This schizophrenia at the root of civilized parenting and education is not limited to the punitive aspect of parent-child relationships. As the title of the next chapter reveals, it is rooted in the very concept of civilized love. In other words, the double bind starts with the first step in the civilizing process, for it stems from the confusion of love with consumption.

Notes

1. See Capellini et al. (2008); Lesku et al. (2006); Berger and Phillips (1988).
2. For instance, Statistics Canada, reports that an “estimated 3.3 million Canadians aged 15 or older, or about one in every seven, have problems going to sleep or staying asleep, and thus are considered to have insomnia, according to a new study in the latest edition of *Health Reports*” on <statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/051116/dq051116a-eng.htm>.
3. For a further discussion of the role of language and symbolic thought in domestication, see John Zerzan’s essays in *Running on Emptiness* (2002).
4. People labelled “eco-terrorists,” who have purposefully *not* harmed life, but have committed acts of disruption against corporations that tortured animals, or other domesticating enterprises, have been receiving maximum sentences for manslaughter, conspiracy and sometimes murder, even when none was committed by them and even though the activists were careful not to hurt anyone. For instance, Barry Horne received an eighteen-year sentence and died of a hunger strike in prison in England on November 5, 2001. Jeffrey Luers, a prisoner at Oregon State penitentiary, has been incarcerated since June 2000 for eco-sabotage arson at a car dealership. He was sentenced to twenty-two years and eight months for that action. Tre Arrow received a six-year sentence in Canada for having scaled the U.S. Forest Service building in Portland in 2000 and lived for eleven days on its

ledge in protest of timber sales in the Mount Hood National Forest. "I wanted to protect those trees that I loved. And I had only my body to protect them with." He was pushed down, but survived. Bruce Ellison, the attorney for Tre Arrow, said that he was facing up to life in prison on these charges, but Tre Arrow agreed to plead guilty and received six years in Canada and was then extradited to the United States. In May 2009 in California, Eric McDavid received a sentence of nineteen years and seven months for *planning* to damage corporate and government property (he hasn't damaged it, though). Animal rights activists in the U.K. don't fare better. Activists demonstrating against animal testing by the Sequani laboratory received up to ten years of prison. They were prosecuted under the 2005 Serious Organized Crime and Police Act (SOCPA). On February 14, 2009, Mel Broughton, an activist in England, received ten years of prison for protesting against the planned construction of an animal experiments testing laboratory in Oxford. Examples abound and there is little of mutuality or reciprocity in the way the laws are written or enacted (Corporate Watch, U.K., June 30, 2009 <corporatewatch.org/?lid=3405>).

5. For an in-depth discussion on the civilized construct of time, see John Zerzan's essay "Time and its Discontents" in *Running on Emptiness* (2002).
6. Gespräche, edition of 1848, vol. Iii: 219, 221 in Kropotkin, 2006: page xiv.
7. For instance, according to Donald A. Levin and Phillip S. Levin, "on average, a distinct species of plant or animal becomes extinct every 20 minutes" (University of Texas report, Austin, 2002). Writing on the Holocene extinction and ecocide, Whitty reports the following:

as harmful as our forebears may have been, nothing compares to what's under way today. Throughout the 20th century the causes of extinction — habitat degradation, overexploitation, agricultural monocultures, human-borne invasive species, human-induced climate-change — increased exponentially; until now in the 21st century the rate is nothing short of explosive. The World Conservation Union's Red List — a database measuring the global status of Earth's 1.5 million scientifically named species — tells a haunting tale of unchecked, unaddressed, and accelerating biocide....

The overall numbers are terrifying. Of the 40,168 species that the 10,000 scientists in the World Conservation Union have assessed, one in four mammals, one in eight birds, one in three amphibians, one in three conifers and other gymnosperms are at risk of extinction. The peril faced by other classes of organisms is less thoroughly analysed, but fully 40 per cent of the examined species of planet earth are in danger, including perhaps 51 per cent of reptiles, 52 per cent of insects, and 73 per cent of flowering plants.

By the most conservative measure — based on the last century's recorded extinctions — the current rate of extinction is 100 times the background rate. But the eminent Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson, and other scientists estimate that the true rate is more like 1,000 to 10,000 times the background rate. The actual annual sum is only an educated guess, because no scientist believes that the tally of life ends at the 1.5 million species already discovered; estimates range as high as 100 million species on earth, with 10 million as the median guess. Bracketed between best- and

worst-case scenarios, then, somewhere between 2.7 and 270 species are erased from existence every day. Including today.

In a 2004 analysis published in *Science*, Lian Pin Koh and his colleagues predict that an initially modest co-extinction rate will climb alarmingly as host extinctions rise in the near future. Graphed out, the forecast mirrors the rising curve of an infectious disease, with the human species acting all the parts: the pathogen, the vector, the Typhoid Mary who refuses culpability, and, ultimately, one of up to 100 million victims.” (Whitty 2007))

8. This theme of the idiot (by civilized standards) as the holder of truth and knowledge because he is driven by empathy has been explored in fiction, for instance: Tayeb Salih's *The Wedding of Zein*, Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, Zamyatin's *We*, Kurosawa's film based on Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, among others.
9. Nekeisha Alexis-Baker gave a cogent lecture at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary entitled “Speciesism, Sexism and Racism: The Intertwining Oppressions.” <nonhumanslavery.com/speciesism-racism-and-sexism-intertwined>.
10. See endnote 4 above.

On Objects, Love and Objectifications

On Love

How to love a child, asked Janush Korchak, the Polish pediatrician and pedagogue at the beginning of the 20th century, which perhaps meant how to be Human. Yet, most people find it difficult to conceive what it is to be able to listen to a child, to respect a child, and to be there for a child even when that child is not one's own, even when one feels it is beyond one's power. The love in your heart will give you the strength, was Korchak's message. Day or night, he would wait by the bedside of a dying child so that when the child's eyes opened they would meet the doctor's and the child would know that she was not alone in this world and then death would seem less cold, less frightful, less lonely. During World War II, the Germans had condemned to death the group of some 200 orphans in his charge. The doctor had a chance to stay behind. He said that he would not abandon his children at this difficult moment of their lives. He went with them and they all vanished one foggy dawn.¹ (Korchak 1990: 476)

In light of the discussion in the previous chapter, the question "what does it mean to love?" — and, more specifically, "how can we be sure that we do love our children?" — is not as straightforward as we have been taught to think and, in the context of the Holocene era, rings with an unprecedented urgency. Korchak's choice is an illustration of the reality of civilization, namely, that when civilization gives us a choice, there really is no choice. At the same time, his decision to remain with the children and perish is both a statement of resistance and an act of wild love rooted in community and unmediated presence — a choice the civilized do not forgive.

On Things: Questions of Cost

Often, parents use the term "love" to justify their absence from their children's lives, replacing themselves with bought objects: "I love you, look what I got you," or, "Stop being ungrateful, Dad and I work so hard because we love you. We've got to work in order to earn money for your own good," the logic being:

1. Work is what brings money. Parents' care for their children is not paid and therefore does not constitute work. Strangers who care for a child are paid and therefore are considered to work, even if childcare is a minimum wage profession, when lucky.
2. We, the parents, work so hard in order to earn money with which to buy you, the child, things and other parent-substitutes, such as formula, pacifiers, toys, babysitters, educators, friends, books, toys, clothes, more toys, ad infinitum.

Even if not always blatant, this reasoning resonates in both the adults' view of children as an unprofitable burden, even if joyful, and in the children's view of themselves as disparate entities striving to become human and thereby acquiescing to relationships that are severed, calculating and cold. At the basis of these relations lies the impulse to accumulate, as it is custom in "the original impoverished society" that is civilization.

Bourdieu included in the term "possessions" the nonmaterial or social and symbolic capital, such as education, taste and knowledge. Material and nonmaterial possessions acquire their value through social understanding and negotiation. Value is not an inherent aspect of objects, effort or time. It is the result of a complex process that involves mythology, education and the mobilization of the whole cultural apparatus to impose the idea, which in the capitalist/globalist world means that some individuals and groups earn disgracefully more for their time and effort while others incomparably less or that some things cost less while others peculiarly more.

For example, one could make a t-shirt from scrap recycled fabric and it would cost one hour worth of effort. If the maker belongs to an upper class with social and economic weight and markets herself as an haute couture and not a low couture designer, she could exchange this scrap t-shirt for thousands of dollars. How does this work?

Bourdieu explains that by belonging to a certain group with social and economic power, a person obtains access to the group's social and symbolic wealth, which allows the person to evaluate his or her effort according to the position that she occupies in the group's scale. In this way, a person sells not only the t-shirt but also the label that marks the buyer as a member of that group. Taste and the act of buying become tickets to specific cliques and, as such, labels differentiate their owners from owners of other labels. Needless to say, currency ratings undergo similar "operations" in order to inflate the rate of some nation states and deflate to the point of total misery, even extinction, the currency of others.

Of course, this works because people believe in this system or resign to it because they have come to view it either as natural or inevitable. If people refused to participate in it, needless to say, it would not be there. But since having been disempowered and dispossessed, yet having someone else lower

than them in the "food chain" to exploit and consume, most people learn to see this system as a given in which they strive to acquire as much material and symbolic capital as they possibly can, thereby succumbing to spending more on overpriced labels, currencies, objects, services, *ad infinitum*. But, as Bourdieu demonstrates, they forget that the stakes in a pyramidal order are predetermined so that the majority will stay at the bottom of the scale regardless of how much they work, purchase or spend. There simply is no space for everyone at the top. Yet, the myths are important to give people the hope and the illusion that if they worked hard, studied more, bought and consumed, each one of them could end up there.

On Things: The Question of Love, Hatred and Shame

The culture of childhood, parenthood or that of child rearing and education is vital for the endurance of a system, particularly for those who profit from it. At first glance, it appears puzzling that even those people who have more to sacrifice than to reap from this inherently parasitic system, where labour is exchanged for the permission to eat, will nonetheless abandon their children to it and to the professionals trained to safeguard the interests of the owners and profiteers of human and nonhuman suffering. Parents justify this act by saying that "we are absent all day from your lives in order to buy you food, things, care, company and love."

Love, in this sense, comprises everything from the hardcore matter to the effervescent idealism that includes taste, types of knowledge and social networks. These parents transmit matter and civilized love (i.e., the predatory desire to possess and consume) in exchange for matter.

Love in the other sense, where a person gives of the self without a price tag attached, has no place in the culture of babysitters, daycare, school, after-school extensions and other "educational" activities. In fact, the majority of parents secretly hate themselves (often without admitting it even to themselves), despise their own knowledge and parental skills, and feel that they are either incompetent or have nothing to transmit because "only professionals can teach my child anything of worth." So, they send their children to the professionals, who transmit to those children, professional paid "love" during the 8 am – 3 pm shifts based on the Ministry of Education curriculum — a programme that is not created out of love or with love. Rather, this curriculum is created from the perspective of how to most efficiently organize labour and consumption patterns. Education offers tools, not love, and since the majority has to stay at the bottom to carry the pyramid on their shoulders, the standardized syllabus is the most effective way to instil subordination, as long as parents do not meddle.

Love, effort and gender issues, therefore, have all become useful concerns in contemporary sociology — a normative science, like psychology. Some feminists have even attempted to calculate the value of love in order to cre-

ate an equation of male and female unaccounted for contribution or effort at home and in society. This is not a bad idea in itself when seen from the civilized logic, but it is highly problematic because it perpetuates that same logic where parenthood is understood as an investment that begins with the provision of social and material capital before and at the expense of other aspects of children's well-being, leading to a crisis of childhood, parenthood and family in the larger global and cross species context.

As discussed in the first chapter, this crisis is rooted in the ontology of domestication. In fact, John Zerzan attributes gender inequalities to the birth of civilization itself.

The locus of the transformation of the wild to the cultural is the domicile, as women become progressively limited to its horizons. Domestication is grounded here (etymologically as well, from the Latin *domus*, or household): drudge work, less robusticity than with foraging, many more children, and a lower life expectancy than males are among the features of agricultural existence for women. (Zerzan 2008: 16)

In more than one way, hence, the domestication of sexuality and reproduction has provided the first hierarchical structure of specialization, exploitation and inequality since civilization began with the appropriation of the reproduction of those whom it has defined as "resources." When someone takes possession of another person's sexuality and reproduction for one's own purpose, forces the other to mate and reproduce when it is convenient for the master in the relationship, and dispossesses the victim of the basic right to make her own decisions about when and with whom to mate, this constitutes rape. Before everything else, therefore, civilization is about "breeding," that is, the selective breeding of crops, animal husbandry and human resources.

As always, this convoluted terminology, such as the term "selective breeding" itself, normalizes and institutionalizes disempowerment and violence. It conceals the fact that rape constitutes a fundamental mechanism for the effective domination and reproduction of resources, a mechanism that is rooted in the ontological foundation of civilized epistemology. For, as civilized humans, we are taught to know how to breed ourselves and other animals in captivity or to know the rape of bovine or turkey women as "artificial insemination." After all, in our epistemology, they are not "women," they are "food," and even if we conceptualize such treatment as morally wrong when committed against human women, we nonetheless justify it when we rationalize the prevalent rape of human women and children in the civilized world as the result of natural impulses that allegedly cannot be eradicated but must and can be managed with "education" and civilized laws. In other words, just as in the case of the intentional infliction of pain

by authority constitutes the basis of punishment, so do the humans higher up the hierarchy get the monopoly of deciding which cases constitute rape and which ones are normal civilized practices, thereby tacitly condoning the violent practices of civilization.

Understandably then, rape is one of the most under-reported crimes, not only because of the stigma and societal blaming of the victim, but because the stigma and the blame-the-victim attitudes are a reflection of the central role of rape and violence in civilized relationships. In "Rape in America: A Report to the Nation," Kilpatrick, Edmunds and Seymour (1992) find that one in six women can expect to be raped in North America, whereby Indigenous women are almost three times more likely to be raped than other races. This does not preclude that the same woman could be repeatedly raped throughout her life. In places that depend on extracting valuable or precious resources, such as raw diamonds or coltan, a substance used in making cellphones and laptops, rape has become a common method of enslavement of women for labour in the mines and other industries.

In a recent study on the "Interface of Rape and HIV in South Africa," Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell, and Dunkle (2009) find a correlation between socio-economic class, level of education and parenting in the likelihood of a man committing rape. The researchers observe that among other factors, "education was also associated, with men who had raped being significantly better educated" and earned more than average. Parenting culture and the absence of empathic relationships at home was another factor in rape.

Parental absence was significantly associated with raping, as was the quality of affective relationships with parents was related to raping. Men who raped perceived both their fathers and mothers to be significantly less kind ($p < 0.0001$). Rape was associated with significantly greater degrees of exposure to trauma in childhood.

Teasing and harassment, or bullying, were reported by many of the men in their childhood. Over half of the men had experienced this themselves (54%) and somewhat fewer (40%) had teased and harassed others. Both experience of bullying and being bullied was much more common among men who raped. (ibid.)

According to the research, hence, getting teased or harassed is correlated with income and education and is a factor in the likelihood of committing rape, which entails a context of unequal relationships. In this respect, prostitution is also a form of coercion that domesticates sexuality since it is based on dispossession not only of food and agency, but also of the pleasure derived from a mutual desire for togetherness, the sense of which had to have been stolen and replaced with a commercial exchange of services or commodity for the means to procure food and things.

Domestication is explicit about dispossession where self-knowledge

and wild purpose get appropriated for production and reproduction. This becomes particularly blatant in the conditions of war, which is a permanent state of civilization, where rape and pillaging are committed by those who enjoy privilege and power over their victims: namely, soldiers, politicians and the various men in control of “resources” and wealth. For, as the above study shows, the higher the level of education and the fatter the paycheque, the more likely the person is to rape. Civilized history is replete with illustrations, the most recent of which are Silvio Berlusconi, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the senior police officers involved in Strauss-Kahn’s prostitution ring,² the Catholic priests raping children, the teachers abusing students in residential schools, public schools, private schools and religious institutions, the incest rapes in the home, among endless cases of systemic domestic sexual violence.³

Of course, not everyone is this utterly and hopelessly civilized, and therefore not everyone rapes literally. Many continue to fight for wild relationships even if they do not always call them so. Still, we are all implicated in this system and our interests are enmeshed in its hierarchical chain of predation, where each of us is concomitantly predator and prey. For, as long as we continue to perceive civilization as ineluctable, we will continue to acquiesce, inadvertently, remaining accomplices in its culture of rape. Moreover, as the South African research demonstrates, there is a link between the industrialization of production and reproduction with “education” factoring in these relationships of abuse. Consequently, even while stating that the role of civilized education is to impart “higher values” of “human rights,” “ethics” and “morality,” education perpetuates abuse and ensures that the human animal remains a predator stuck in a parasitic relationship with the self and the world.

Hence, being an inherent aspect of civilization and its relationships of consumption, the problem of exploitation, violence and rape cannot be resolved by civilized means of educating people and least of all by a symbolic calculation of “labour” and “price,” because child bearing, child rearing, the making of things, sexual intercourse, pleasures and suffering — everything in this system of things — has *a priori* been priced. Value, however, constantly undergoes devaluation particularly with the hyperexponential growth in the numbers of domesticated human and nonhuman resources and the subsequent depletion of “natural resources” and environmental destruction. In this respect, undervalued, abused, raped and exploited parenthood is a symptom that is manifested in the pricing system discussed above, where the time and effort spent by a parent on a child are not valued and childcare has to remain a low-pay occupation that carries with it the constant threat of being raped, because the cost value in any production has to be minimized while the retail price must be inflated as much as the “market” can handle in order to maximize the owners’ profit.⁴

This raises many questions, but to answer them, one needs to revise the very ontology in which civilized anthropologies and epistemologies are rooted. For instance, how are we going to evaluate the process of conception if those we conceive will ultimately be educated to assume a role within the food chain? This is particularly relevant for the lower economic strata, because their only means to obtain resources is to produce human resources for exploitation. When a child is born, how is one to calculate who spends what, how much time is needed, and who gains what? Then, what about the time, sleep and litres of blood “spent” on a pregnancy and then on breastfeeding? After all, mother’s milk is made from the woman’s blood, so she needs good nutrition, outdoor light, sleep, rest, happiness and time. Then, how are we going to price the time spent on bonding? On caring? On turning the wild child into a human? Or on the countless other intricacies of human relationships?

My point is that motherhood is priceless. Like no other sphere, it requires wilderness and cannot thrive without a diverse community that supports life. Hence, childcare can never have a price tag because there is too much at stake, including, and even foremost, the viability of the whole planet. Since the majority of people in civilization in general — and in the sphere of childcare in particular — do the hardest and dirtiest work, yet fare most poorly, this low status of parenthood reflects the “specialization” of other “dirty” jobs, where by means of a real threat of starvation, people and animals are forced to labour in both senses of the word. On the one hand, the capitalist system needs producers to generate clean streets, technological or industrial gadgets, and future generations of workers and soldiers. On the other hand, these “producers” are despised, and it is precisely this attitude that keeps everyone in “her” place and silent, since words are used to mislead but not to name the thing.

Here is an example of how misnaming helps structure exploitation and inequality. Marilyn Bronstein has been running a women’s co-op for mothers with young children in Montreal for several decades. She discovered that she could not mention the word “mother” in applications for grants:

You have to say “women.” Wait a minute, but aren’t women mothers? Apparently not. The second no-no is any mention of childcare. My project focused on creating community viable outlets. Childcare is time and energy consuming. It is a serious issue, if you want the best for the family. Apparently, that is not viewed as a socially viable solution that deserves serious (i.e., publicly funded) consideration. (Bronstein 2007)

Another grant, Marilyn explained, intended to help women get into non-traditional jobs.

I told that to my agent and he said, "So you're going to stir up all these women and then there won't be any jobs waiting for me." So I changed the grant to teaching women self-esteem when they're not in the workforce. And I got the grant. Grant priorities change from year to year like fashion. (ibid.)

First, it is obviously in the male administrator's interest to continue to have a cohort of marginalized and oppressed women/mothers so that he can continue to get paid to direct them. On another level, this reveals the general attitude towards parenthood, and specifically motherhood and the role of domesticated reproduction in the production of human resources. Furthermore, public discourse designates childcare as a low priority, mostly private responsibility until the child is ready to be institutionalized in obligatory schooling — a social paradigm of domesticating the resources and training them to accept their roles in the hierarchy of suffering. In this way, the civilized discourse shifts the focus from love as a relationship of mutual support and respect to a relationship mediated by symbolic signs, predatory values and materialism, while the civilized structure places parenthood and childhood within a claustrophobic space of domesticated, unvalued and unrequited love.

The statistics on poverty demonstrate that there are proportionally few winners in this system of things that domesticates wild love by promising to give in return for service some of the food and things stolen from the domesticated person. For, if the poor workers bestow little time, social capital or precious matter upon their progeny, those who fare better financially compensate with acquisitions the time they lose at work and in social networking at clubs, bars, parties or in other forms of entertainment — time that always and inevitably gets converted into social capital. In this logic, things become directly proportionate to "love" and beg the question: what type of people and what degree of their health can such a culture nurture? By health I mean the functioning in harmony with the social and natural environment.

The topic of poverty is key for the context where material culture is the basis of relationships, for access to material goods is an important part of how people view themselves and others. Here are two examples to illustrate this self-perception.

"I grew up extremely poor," I heard on numerous occasions in Canada and the U.S. Such proclamations always startled me. What is it like to characterise oneself as poor? Myself, I grew up in a household with financial strains — at times dire — but I never perceived myself or my family as "poor." Rather the opposite. Growing up, I felt happy. I asked what it meant to grow up poor in North America. My poor interlocutors replied that they could not buy new clothes.

"It was horrible. I hated going to school, 'cause others had fancy new clothes while mine always came from the thrift shop. And then for Christmas, everyone had those big Christmas trees with lots of new decorations and boxes and boxes of gifts, but we always had this same old plastic one with the same old stuff and little second-hand-shop gifts. I hated my mother. I hated my home. I was always so ashamed of them. Brrr ... I couldn't wait to grow up and get away from them [parents]" explained Lynne, a graduate of Smith College who grew up in California.

Suzan, a writer from Ontario, also focused on clothes.

I grew up extremely poor. I never had new clothes. They were always hand-downs. My mother decided to have the three of us knowing she'd be a single mom since my father never intended to marry her. But she couldn't handle the responsibility. So when we got the welfare cheque, we felt like millionaires. That's how poor we've been ... I always attended private schools, 'cause I had scholarships. All those other kids had rich parents and nice things and I was always wearing hand-down pants. Sometimes fifth generation. I hated it. (Field notes, Montreal, March 2005)

Both of these examples are characteristic of the majority of the comments I heard on growing up poor in the context of "developed" countries. Much of the perception of poverty is related to wanting new things, more things and better things, like-other-people's things, better-than-other-people's things. In other words, the pressure to fit into an outside material standard shifts the dimensions of inside relations and togetherness to splintered childhoods, shattered by objects, the lack of them and the desire to possess.

Suzan's comment is the more interesting one because it reveals the extent of privation to which her family had been subjected apart from having had to wear hand-me-down clothes. For, if they lived on less than welfare for several years, it means that they had no provision in terms of basic necessities, and in the Western lands colonized by civilization — where access to nature and public space costs money — it means that they were also deprived of space along with time. Public transportation here is expensive, which means that the amount of symbolic currency one has to pay for a bus ride is much higher than many people receive in exchange for their labour. Moreover, it is not comprehensive in what it can reach. Without a car, one feels handicapped in North America. Many bicycle paths leading to the countryside in Quebec, such as *le petit chemin du nord*, cost money.

Europeans do not fare better. For instance, in an article on European poverty, Sumlennyj and Koksharov (2010) provide vivid examples on the inability of the residents of an impoverished neighbourhood in Glasgow to buy

a metro ticket to visit a different part of the same city, a situation that leads to many growing up without knowing anything outside of their immediate neighbourhood. Furthermore, the authors cite Oxfam statistics showing that a child born in an economically deprived neighbourhood of a European city, such as Glasgow, can expect to live on average almost thirty years less than a compatriot born in a well-to-do neighbourhood of the same city.

Like the serfs of feudalism, the poor continue to be trapped in closed colonized spaces. In an anthropological monograph entitled *The Broken Fountain*, Belmonte (1989) depicts the lives of the residents in one of the most impoverished neighbourhoods of Naples, Italy, and the struggles with the borders of poverty that lock its residents in a claustrophobic world of injustice. Ethnographic and anthropological accounts from other parts of the world confirm the power of these tangible borders between economic disparities that play an integral role in the engineering of space, time and love. This despair in love was poignantly depicted by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) in *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*, where she describes impoverished mothers' resignation to the reality of many of their children starving to death.

In all the colonized/civilized contexts, space, time and nourishment are intricately intertwined. For, each meal counts towards the energy and time needed to perform a task. No meal, no energy. Time ticks between the meals and the longer the gap — the less there is of performance. This applies to everything, to meals and to bills: if the shoes are too tight, too leaky, too uncomfortable, one cannot get far in cold weather and one gets stressed. If there is no coat, if there is no heating (and we know that heating companies cut off families who do not pay), one gets stressed. Unlike the warmth of wilderness, where human and other animals could choose to live north of the Arctic circle, in civilized spaces time has been colonized, and colonized spaces are cold, cramped, stressful and lonely. Hungry and crowded people with no exit, whether they are children or adults, scream and burst out with aggression sometimes against the violence of institutionalized injustice, but more often amongst themselves and against those weaker than themselves.

Suzan's case is not an exception, rather the contrary. Here is what the *Encyclopedia of Social Welfare History in North America* says about Canada, who boasts more national wealth and higher commitment to social justice than some other countries:

Younger single people, aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, women, and children are more likely to be poor than other Canadians.... Unattached seniors, particularly women, have very high poverty rates.... The poverty rate for young single people increased from 39% in 1981 to 61% in 1997. The poverty rate for persons with disabilities was 31% in 1995.... Single women under

age 65 have higher poverty rates than men, 41% compared to 35%. Female single parents had the highest poverty rate of all family types at 56% in 1997. Child poverty remains a particular concern to Canadians because children are unambiguously not to blame for their situation. Also, raising children in poverty hampers their career opportunities. Children's poverty rate, regardless of background, rose to 1.4 million or 20% of the total population by year 2000. (Shillington 2005: 280-83)

The formulation of the above paragraph implies that, since children are not to blame for their poverty, adults are to be held accountable for their misfortunes. Yet, the authors concede that growing up poor hampers the future adults' opportunities. This begs the question: are we expected to blame them when they grow up or do we concede that all adults have once been children, many of whom either grew up in want or were coerced into it? What the implications of this logic leave out of the discourse is that the mechanism of exploitation is set so as to constantly keep devaluing human and animal effort and inflating costs, because the civilized economy is inherently unsustainable. Just as it is with cattle and other enslaved animal people, the more human resources the system produces, the more they need and the less they get. Depletion and inflation are the natural consequences of colonialism.

Now, if Canadian statistics on poverty are outrageous, the United States boasts the highest poverty rates among industrialized states. Incarceration is one of the effects of criminalized resistance to unjust socio-economic relationships.

Prison statistics are further revealing of the distribution of power and social relations in North America and their effect on childhood and parenthood. For example, according to Vicky Pelaez, there "are approximately 2 million inmates in state, federal and private prisons throughout the [U.S.]. According to California Prison Focus, "no other society in human history has imprisoned so many of its own citizens." The figures show that the United States has locked up more people than any other country: a half million more than China, which has a population five times greater than the U.S. Statistics reveal that the United States holds 25% of the world's prison population, but only 5% of the world's people. (Pelaez 2005)

Incarceration is useful for civilization in several ways. Not only does it criminalize the dispossessed, but since prisoners constitute an important niche for cheap labour, the solution sought in North America is to make prisons private, where prisoners would work directly for big businesses who now find Africans, Asians and Latin Americans too costly (*ibid.*). According to Statistics Canada, Canadians do not fare better. Whole groups can find themselves

ousted from the arena of the so-called national wealth. For instance, First Nations comprise less than 3 percent of total populace, yet most of them are either in poverty or in jail.

- In Saskatchewan, Aboriginal adults are incarcerated at 35 times the rate of non-aboriginals, where they make up 77% of the total prisoner population (10% of outside population).
- In the Yukon — Aboriginal adults make up 74% of the total prisoner population (20% of outside population).
- In Manitoba — Aboriginal adults make up 70% of the total prisoner population (11% of outside population).
- In Alberta — Aboriginal adults make up 38% of the total prisoner population (4% of outside population).
- In Ontario — Aboriginal adults make up 9% of the total prisoner population (1% of outside population).
- In British Columbia — Aboriginal adults make up 20% of the total prisoner population (10% of outside population). (Prison Justice)

According to Prison Justice Statistics,

- Aboriginal women make up 30% of the female prisoner population.
- In Saskatchewan, Aboriginal women account for 87% of all female admissions.
- In Manitoba and the Yukon, Aboriginal women account for 83% of all female admissions.
- In Alberta, Aboriginal women account for 54% of all female admissions.
- In British Columbia, Aboriginal women account for 29% of all female admissions.

If we consider that, in the wealthy countries alone, over the utterly miserable multitudes hovers a hefty miserable middle class stressing to make ends meet, then this leaves few satisfied childhoods that are out of poverty or jail. The most important revelation of the statistics is the brutality and injustice towards motherhood, womanhood, ethnic minorities, and childhood and youth. The obvious question here is: who and what factors are responsible for all these people being in poverty or in jail? More important, if civilization promises that hard work in the interest of its hierarchy is better, healthier and safer for everyone than the wild, then why has the quality of life only been deteriorating since the advent of civilization and life on earth is on the brink of extinction?

These questions are relevant to the culture of parenthood and childhood, for childhood is impossible in a dead world. Hence, civilized values and myths

have to be revised radically starting with the agrarian and industrial societies' demand for high birth rates and then with the content and methods of the pedagogical culture. A fundamental civilized myth holds that fertility rates have risen in agricultural civilization because supposedly life has improved. The very problem of domestication, that is, unsustainable fertility rates, is thus taken as evidence to prove the "viability" of a socio-economic paradigm that is based on rape. Armelagos et al. (1991) refute the argument that attributes the population growth during the Neolithic to an alleged improvement in the quality of life. The authors of "The Origins of Agriculture: Population Growth During a Period of Declining Health" examine the demographic data pertaining to population density prior to agriculture, which demonstrates that during the Paleolithic, human population growth remained stable at zero, enjoyed low mortality rates, and had a strong culture of self-regulation in reproductive strategies. They begin their examination by breaking down the components of the civilized-Malthusian-Darwinian argument that erroneously links "progress" with "fertility," "population growth" and "increase of food due to agriculture":

The interpretation of the very low population growth during the Paleolithic has influenced demographic thinking in a number of ways. The lack of Paleolithic population growth has been explained by arguing that populations were experiencing maximum fertility and very high mortality. Neolithic population explosion, it is argued, resulted from improved nutrition and health; these acted to reduce mortality, and the change in demographic pattern led to a rapid increase in population. It is further argued that reduction of fertility in the modern period, which decreased the population growth rate, introduced the era of the demographic transition. *We seriously question this interpretation of Paleolithic and Neolithic demography and believe prehistoric populations demography deserves reanalysis* [emphasis mine].

In reviewing the literature on population dynamics of Paleolithic population, Goodman, Jacobs, and Armelagos (1975) were able to isolate two basic and accepted assumptions used in Paleolithic demography: 1) that *the potential* growth of hominid populations has not appreciably changed since *the early Pleistocene*, and 2) that *Paleolithic hunters-gatherers* were involved in a highly stable equilibrium system with respect to their population size and realized rate of growth [authors' emphasis]. (Armelagos et al. 1991)

Thus having debunked the myth that falsely constructs civilization as benign, the authors elaborate on where the civilized logic has misinterpreted the facts. Namely, the concepts of "health" and "quality of food" have been subject to inflation — a necessary concomitant of civilization — and therefore civilized people have come to expect and accept low standards of

living. Armelagos et al. demonstrate that, in reality, it has always been the other way around; people have always enjoyed a good life in wilderness, while civilization spread diseases, imposed misery and shortened lifespan. Hence, an

increase in the Neolithic human population following the development of agriculture has been assumed to result from improvements in health and nutrition. Recent research demonstrates that this assumption is incorrect. With the development of sedentism and the intensification of agriculture, there is an increase in infectious disease and nutritional deficiencies particularly affecting infants and children. Declining health probably increased mortality among infants, children and oldest adults. However, the productive and reproductive core would have been able to respond to this increase in mortality by reducing birth spacing. That is, agricultural populations increased in size, despite higher mortality, because intervals between births became shorter. (Armelagos et al. 1991)

First, the authors name civilization and agriculture as the original culprits in the increased mortality rates and deteriorated health, particularly in children and women. In civilization, people live shorter and painful lives, while in wilderness they enjoy a healthier and happier existence. Both health and happiness are crucial factors for longevity. Second, the trend of stable population density in nomadic and gatherer societies shifts to sudden population growth as soon as they adopt sedentary and agricultural lifestyles, instantly decreasing spacing between children and the number of nursing years. These trends have been observed throughout the literature on cultural concepts in medical anthropology. For instance, Susan Rasmussen's article in the *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology* (Ember and Ember 2004: 1001–08) describes the traditionally low birth rates and healthy lifestyles of the nomadic Tuareg, who are one of the most egalitarian societies still existing in the world where "working" or other classes do not exist. Both genders in the Tuareg enjoy equal rights to inheritance, travel, initiation of conversation and courtship. However, due to the newly enforced national borders and the exacerbated "post-"colonial wars in Africa, some Tuareg clans began to adopt a sedentary lifestyle. Within mere two decades, these communities experienced hikes in population growth with increasing pressure on women to bear more children (between six and eight) at shorter intervals between them (Rasmussen in Ember and Ember 2004).

Decreased nursing greatly weakens a child's immune system because maternal milk provides vital antibodies. Disruption in attachment parenting further threatens the health of both parents and children, since they need relationships of trust, togetherness and understanding to thrive. In other words, civilized parenting methods increase susceptibility to diseases, especially that shortened intervals between childbirths increase population density

in the family, and dense populations facilitate the transmission of contagious diseases. Outbursts of civilization are always accompanied by exploding epidemics. Thus, by means of exploitation, malnourishment, stress, overcrowding and weakened immunity, civilization disrupts the intricate relationships that wild societies have with their direct environment and community of life. Civilization further coerces wild societies into relationships of dependence on colonialism by imposing on them chemically engineered medicine, itself a product of contemporary colonized (also known as globalized) economies, with serious side effects to personal, social and environmental health. In this way, the three basic constituents of civilization — namely, sedentary agriculture, domestication of sexuality, and ownership — are inseparable in the ensuing civilized order and its system of education. For, in this vicious circle, both the civilized order and its system of education respond to civilization's needs for violence and exploitation and at the same time are the outcome of its ontology.

Sedentism thus engenders a stratified, ownership-oriented culture rooted in relationships of dependence that require its members to specialize in narrow fields of production. More than any other sphere, specialization affects the production and rearing of living "resources," which becomes the "occupation" of human and animal women — this "occupation" being the source of increased pressure on them to have children thereby subjecting them to systemic rape. Since resources and the product of their labour belong to someone else and not to the exploited subjects themselves, it is in the owners' interests to minimize the costs of production in order to maximize the gains. Consequently, the first to suffer are the "raw" products and their producers, that is, children and mothers.

This system of specialized dependencies leaves little manoeuvre for subjugated and dispossessed women but to invest in the production of human resources. As producers, mothers' interests, like their owners', become vested in minimizing even more production costs and maximizing their own fertility. Each production batch needs a larger production batch to both compensate for the maintenance costs and to continue maintaining it. Thus, a socio-economic paradigm based on the ontology of "resources" and "ownership" requires a constant exponential growth in population, is inherently unsustainable, and by its very nature perpetuates the ever-escalating massacres and extinctions. The resulting increased population density has facilitated the spread of contagious diseases and caused malnourishment on an unprecedented scale posing the greatest threat to women and children as well as to the groups identified as competition or enemy: rats, wolves or raccoons, among many others. In contemporary political language, the same attitudes are manifest in the definition of threat attributed to "terrorists," Muslims, Soviets, Communists, anarchists, among others. I suggest that, just like in the European revolutions of the intellectuals (Namier 1992), a new

vision drove people to restructure their relationships, rooting them in an exclusive cannibalistic identity. This new ontological perspective has come to constitute the main drive of the Neolithic revolution; it prompted humans to disregard the laws of wilderness for balance and the preservation of life; and instead to choose to restructure their lives according to the concept of “agency” and “resources,” which allowed the agents to control the lives and reproduction of others, while forcing the others to be educated to submit and to overproduce.

Current statistics in the “developed” world on income, race, gender, as well as on other indicators of access to good food (or even to any food at all), medical services, time for oneself, etc., reveal the ever-growing rates of debilitating and fatal diseases, such as cancer, AIDS and Alzheimer’s, which are all diseases of civilization that lead to poor quality of life and low life expectancy rates, especially among the poor and the middle class. For instance, U.S. Government statistics on life expectancy by race scores significantly lower for black Americans as compared to white Americans. Here, in the first year of life, 75.7 white males on average are expected to live and only 69.7 of black males have the same chances.⁵ As for the mortality rates listed by the census bureau, these are even more heartbreaking: for every 1000 lives, 6.12 white male babies and 5.01 white female babies are expected to die before the age of one as compared to 14.48 deaths of black male babies and 12.23 black female babies.⁶

To return to Suzan and Lynne’s examples above, the poor have been educated to rationalize poverty as natural and to perceive this reality as a still better existence than life in wilderness. What struck me the most in their reflections is that their understanding of poverty focused on the lack of new clothes. They have not expressed to me compassion or love towards their struggling parents and siblings; mostly they blamed and hated them — understandable but misdirected emotions towards the violence inherent to the injustice of social relations fostered by seclusion, alienation, deprivation and stress.

Because this globalizing culture constructs possession and wealth as a question of merit, then parenthood, or the investment into the production of human resources, has to be deserved and earned according to a scale of income. That is why Suzan judged her mother as irresponsible. In other words, the dispossessed human resources are forced into domesticated (re) production, and yet are blamed for the “costs,” while the wealthy hardly (re) produce, except for the symbolic production and confiscation of symbolic wealth, which they keep undivided and transmitted within the lineage. Again, the moral and the material intertwine here and the victims’ alienation from their own interests is astounding for, more than anyone, mothers need safe and supportive communities to raise children. Contrary to my expectation, however, the majority of the working women I have interviewed expressed

a preference for "employment" and alienation from their own interests in having a community based on mutual aid.

"I'm against prolonged maternity leave," said Agnes, a chemist in Montreal. "Each time I had a kid, I went back to the laboratory when they were three months old. If you don't have enough money to pay for your stay at home, then you have to work. If you can't work, then don't have kids. It's as simple as that." Agnes had two children and said that she couldn't afford any more. (Field notes, Montreal, June 2000)

Such examples indicate that in North America, even in Canada where parents can resort to a more extended parental leave and welfare, the notion of having children is tightly linked to income. Income, children and the standard of living are conceptualized as natural categories that are the result of a person's worth and a reflection of what the person deserves: if one is wealthy, one deserves it. If one is in financial strain, one merits poverty but not children, even though it is the poor people who breed the most. Love and compassion are read in the context and from a life stance of consumerism and ultimately predation.

Furthermore, these examples reveal that the pressure to possess — not make — things is a major force underlying the feeling of deprivation and poverty. It is a reflection of impotence and sterility since people have been rendered incapable of generating what they need and yet get coerced into providing things for the "market" while ignoring the context of pain and exploitation that is inherent to capitalist production and market economy. It is important to remember though, that when parents choose to replace themselves with toys, books, live-in care, nannies, genetically modified food, etc., they replace themselves with objects imbued with immense suffering.

We are taught to view capitalism as an overall "successful" evolution of civilization and to think of rape, poverty and murder as isolated instances of individuals failing to be "educated" and civilized. I argue, however, that the rampant rape, poverty and murder are symptoms of an ontological discriminatory practice at the root of civilized epistemology, which is based on categorization and systematization. Feminism is a particularly relevant example here that illuminates this problem from different angles, because the exploitation and discrimination of women is tightly linked with the civilized parenting culture.

Having been exploited for the duration of civilization, like all humans and nonhumans, women have resisted the colonization of their bodies and purpose. However, today, one group of mainly white women has been successful in the invention of modern-day feminism with some women reaching a stage where they can boast more access to well-paid exploitation (also known as jobs). Concomitantly, high numbers of impoverished women and children in the third world pay the price for the work related to reproduction that the empowered, mostly white, women no longer do.

This pertains to both the adoption of children and to women being imported from the third world on “live-in-nanny” and domestic help visas. Because these stay permits are contingent on the employer’s satisfaction, and since the “job” descriptions for what constitutes housekeeping and child or senior-care tasks are open to interpretation, in addition to work-related exploitation, many of these women are coerced into providing sexual services to the liberated women’s men (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000).⁷ In other words, the empowered women are liberated at the expense of their disempowered sisters and the domestication of sexuality once again plays a critical role in the transfer of gendered services in all the spheres of life, including the “provision” of sex.

What prompts the disempowered women to seek the undervalued jobs, which the empowered women had fought hard to be liberated from, is not a love for victimization. They do this because they face greater threats, such as death and extinction, from the empowered lifestyles led by the very people who hire them. This is something that the liberated women understand very well when they observe their own social and economic disparities with white men, but refuse to acknowledge when they exploit other women, thereby exhibiting civilized apathy, ignorance and double standards. According to Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild (2002) and Hochschild (2000), the employing women do not hesitate to rationalize the situation in the following logic, which I have simplified for the purpose of exposing the rationale: “Yes, the wonderful Filipina live-in nanny has abandoned her three young children with her old relatives in the Philippines because it is so bad over there. Anyway, it is common practice over there. That’s what everyone does there, they leave their children and migrate to the Middle East, Western Europe or North America. So, here I am, an agent of power, who has enabled her to leave her oppressive reality where instead of taking care of her own family, community and home, she now takes care of my needs. Just look how loving she is with our Tommy, isn’t that nice?”

If housework enjoyed an equal status with other professions, there would have been no sense in hiring another woman to work in one’s home so that the employing woman could work in public. Namely, in order to be able to afford hired home workers, the employing women must buy their health, careers, private lives, time, home maintenance and personal grooming at a depreciated price. An added cost in this equation is the neglect of the home workers’ own communities as they abandon their own children and elderly in order to serve the needs of feminism and participate in the liberation of those who can afford to be free. In this chain of “borrowing” and depreciation of labour, the effort of those who are left to take care of the migrant workers’ children and former environment is valued even less than the already abused migrant workers, who are valued less than the previously exploited feminists, who are still exploited when compared to white men.⁸

Caught in this vicious circle of civilized prices, the various laws and government programmes designed to control immigration, regulate poverty, alleviate abuse or manage anything at all, cannot solve the real problem, which is an ontological one — the existence of a parasitic structure and narrative of domination, because like education, these programmes are designed to control the resources, not to free or rewild them. As Wally Seccombe (Fox 1980) argues, in fact, the more the state interferes in an attempt to regulate this abuse generated by the deficit of energy and the more the taxes are increased or cutbacks made in education, social welfare, and in other industries, particularly those related to children, the stronger the pressure on women, especially those in disadvantaged social positions, to work harder and longer. This intensification of state interference and the constant devaluation of effort and lives is an inevitable outcome of civilization and domesticated relationships. In other words, from all angles, an attempt to address these symptoms of civilization without dealing with the ontological problem itself ultimately leads to the system's bankruptcy.

Consequently, what does a child get when she is left behind with her siblings in the "third" world, while her mother caters to the wealthy children in the "Global North"?⁹ And what does a child in the "Global North" get when his mother abandons him for work while he is taken care of by the nanny who abandoned her own children across the globe so that she could send her children, who are hungry in every sense of the word, the pennies bestowed on her by the wealthy Northerners?

In addition to this problem of childcare, there is the issue of food, engineered to reproduce with the least cost for the maximum profit. The genetically modified grains, fruits and vegetables carry sterile seeds that are incapable of the basic instinct of life: self-reproduction. The sterilization of pets, the poisonous pesticides and fungicides, the third-worlders dying from exhaustion and malnutrition, the first- and second-worlders stressed to the point of madness, the animals tortured on farms and in medical and scientific laboratories, and so much more — all engender objects of hatred, suffering and death. This context is an essential part of the relationship between objects and people.

Children abandoned to these "objects" inhale this hatred and suffering. Abandoned to the claws of ministerial curriculum, they also learn to perceive themselves as poor regardless of what niche in the food chain they occupy. Conceiving themselves as poor, they become impotent, lusting to amass and to consume and when they cannot satisfy this urge, instead of questioning the system that from the onset has betrayed them, most often, they internalize their place in it and learn to hate themselves and their parents.

Hatred seems to be the central lesson of a curriculum that leads to devout consumerism and hence to a crisis of childhood, parenthood, family and life.

On Things: The Question of Categorization and Interests

The rising rates regarding the inability of children and adults to deal with civilization reveal the extent of the crisis. Neurological, mental and personality disorders are symptoms of children's alienation from themselves and their environment. Anorexia, bulimia and plastic surgeries reveal self-hate. Autism, dyslexia and other reading or learning disorders, attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity, depression (manic, chronic, et al.) schizophrenia, outbursts of violence, just to name a few — all point to the disconnectedness from the self and from the outside world. Nevertheless, the domesticated parents continue to believe the authorities that their children need even more education, medication and domestication.

Deterioration of connectedness and learning abilities is normalized by the language that the authorities use to describe the phenomenon in terms that conceal cause and effect. For instance, in 2001, Statistics Canada published a report entitled "A Profile of Disability in Canada." The report draws a link between school and disability, but the formulation of the subheading is already an exercise in deception: "The transition from home to school: A key factor in identifying certain types of disability in children."¹⁰ The first problem arises from the implication that there are "abilities" and "disabilities," categories that are strictly contingent on the concept of "resources" and usefulness: one is "able" if one can work and one is "unable" if one cannot be exploited. Because all children are herded towards utilitarian purposes, this position deems fair the subjection of all children to school so as to "identify" "disabilities" and, as discussed in Patton's essay above, find ways in which they can still be exploited. Moreover, this position treats every child as suspect and possible deviant from the "norm" and thus everyone is urged to submit to the scrutiny by the experts at school in order to catch the few who threaten with "disability" (i.e., unemployment). But, does not the mechanism of "questioning" often bear the fruit of confession regardless of whether one has committed the crime or not? Thus, many of the suspected children do fulfil the prophecy and become "disabled" and "disruptive."

Second, the authors admit that the proportions of some types of disability, such as learning disabilities, increase when children begin to attend school. They do not question the role of the school in causing these "disabilities" and instead explain as follows: "The transition from home to school may explain some of this variation. For example, learning disabilities are often not apparent until the child begins to attend school; as well, these difficulties are more easily detected within the school context" (ibid.). However, does the school "detect" the problem or cause it? It is even more peculiar that many parents do not think that there may be anything wrong with the fact that their child had been learning well at home yet is diagnosed with a learning disability at school or that sometimes the child's behaviour deteriorates and even changes completely the minute she is placed in school.

This convoluted logic is a problem of civilized epistemology that categorizes resources in terms of their utility and goes as far as categorizing pregnancy itself with diseases and disorders. In 1993, a doctor in the United States explained to me that the signs on university campuses, inviting students to the infirmary, grouped pregnancy together with sexually transmitted infections, because as a "natural" "biological" category, pregnancy is viewed as a parasitic growth with tumour-like behaviour.

The point here is not to argue pro-life or pro-choice in the American political sense. The point is that categorization itself is not neutral but has the power to impart specific knowledge, logic and values that are part of symbolic capital. In the logic of a culture that emphasizes individualism often pushed to the extreme of egoism, indeed, any life that comes to depend on another, be it a child on a parent, a parent on a child, a friend on a friend or an unemployed on "social aid" is seen as parasitic, as illness. Ultimately, this language conceals the parasitic essence in the relationship between power and disempowerment and the dependence of the wealthy on poverty and suffering.

In spite of everything, however, children appear. They manage to appear in a world of totalitarian birth control, high-tech medical facilities and institutionalized schizophrenia. Each child is a miracle indeed. Yet, these miracles begin to suffer and to battle for their existence before they are even conceived as an idea. When they are conceived as physical entities, their scream for love and their whole being are reduced to physical explanations.

North American scientists accentuate the "genetic" or "physiological" interpretations of human mysteries. They attribute our cannibalistic practices and carnivorousness to a genetic makeup. They invent a murderous gene, a gay chromosome, serotonin levels and so forth. These explanations naturalize "deviance" but also imply that there is something wrong with these practices and ignore the element of choice. For instance, a person's choice to love someone outside the civilized "breeding sanctions," such as homosexuality, is not the same as the choice to kill. However, since both murder and sexuality constitute the basis of domestication, it becomes crucial to control who sleeps with whom and who kills whom.

Furthermore, genetic explanations allow parents and all involved to ignore, with a drowsy conscience, the symptoms of unhappiness, frustration and decay. Instead of changing the system that causes this vacuum and pain, they dive deeper into it, submerging their families in the ocean of material love and beloved purchases. Medication, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, criminologists and police are all necessary attributes in this system of things, paid for by the parents' sacrifice of their children and love on the scaffold of civilization. In this regard, archeology, phenomenology and hermeneutics were bound to take root in a culture that valued possessions.

Bourdieu defined Western materialism as a system in the relationship between the possessor and the object of possession in these terms:

Legitimate manners owe their value to the fact that they manifest the rarest conditions of acquisition, that is, a social power over time which is tacitly recognized as the supreme excellence: to possess things from the past, i.e., accumulated, crystallized history, aristocratic names and titles, chateaux or “stately homes,” paintings and collections, vintage wines and antique furniture, is to master time, through all those things whose common feature is that they can only be acquired in the course of time, by means of time, against time, that is, by inheritance or through dispositions which, like the taste for old things, are likewise only acquired with time and applied by those who can take their time. (Bourdieu 1996: 71)

Not only does time become a dimension of wealth along with things, and in spite of their murderous essence, the civilized act as if things can secure immortality, as if they can vanquish the poverty of the spirit and the feebleness of the body. Manners, time and things thus become the prostheses of the handicapped victims of civilization, and parents are the primary fetishists who consistently weaken their children with the consumerist lifestyle. As Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh note in their research on children’s popular culture, a child’s bedroom has become the nest or “haven of ‘hyper-consumerism’ and popular culture fantasy” (2002: 113). In fact, the room itself can be regarded as punishment, for the authors further note that “being sent to one’s room, as we see represented in the children’s book by Maurice Sendak *Where the Wild Things Are* (1983) is regarded as punishment; it is not the same as going there freely” (ibid.). I would venture further in this connection: consumerism is punishment bestowed upon the human ape as agricultural civilization. But this is not an ineluctable fate. The human ape can still choose to repudiate this curse.

Yet, consumerism is imposed on children as early as birth, and even prior to it. First, possible parents strive to “liberate” themselves financially, so they use contraceptives to “liberate” themselves from the possible child. Sterilization stands out in particular here as it annihilates the very idea of conception and creation and thus reveals consumerism as vehicle for impotence and sterility. In nomadic and gatherer societies, relationships of diversity impelled people to keep population growth at zero. In contrast, civilized societies curb their reproduction for egocentric reasons, mostly consumerist.

Hence, when the possible finally become actual parents, they immediately set off to “liberate” themselves from the child again, this time with babysitters, nursery, daycare, school, tutors and after-school extensions in order to consecrate their time to “more important” things: earning money and serving the “public” good, though which public and what good is another question raised by the aforementioned statistics on poverty and jail. In serving the offspring by earning money and spending it on strangers — the

“professionals” — parents believe that they thus provide care, health, safety and curriculum. The more they earn, the more they claim to love, to be good parents and good members of society, and the more things they acquire.

But objects do not appease the child's not yet stifled craving for love in the nonmaterial and wild sense. The child screams and demands something which often neither she nor the adults know how to articulate, or perhaps are not even fully aware of — that primeval instinct of being cuddled, snuggled, nursed, looked at, sniffed, pampered, protected, respected and other such animal stuff. Instead, the civilized fight these instincts and impose “independence” that amounts to: “My child is independent when she does not intrude into my space but has her own space which touches mine occasionally without disrupting me, between the babysitters, daycare, school and work.”

Since money and objects have come to symbolize and replace love, the child demands more and more and does not understand why all this love in the form of things does not appease the other, the primordial, the unspoken repressed urge; that is, until the demands are muted. Since how much a child is “loved” is also an indication of the child's place in society, then by the same logic, the more the child has, the better she is expected to feel among people. Envy and rivalry are bred by consumerism, and the fetishism of the contemporary world demands ever more sacrifices and things. However, because things and capital exist in a context of pain, exploitation and lies, any replacement of a living being with things replaces love with pain, exploitation and lies.

In this consumerist expression of civilized ontology, as a social construct, love has assumed a predatory meaning. Now, love entails the feeling of desire by the lover to satisfy his or her needs, wants and appetite. When one says, “I love ice cream,” it means that one wants to eat it. When one says, “I love this woman,” it implies that the speaker wants this woman to gratify his desires. If there is a concern for the woman that she be happy and well, it usually comes second.¹¹ With regard to civilized parent-child relationships, this explains children's fascination with stories of cannibalism, such as “Hansel and Gretel,” where the parents abandon the children in the forest because they cannot feed them, and the witch lures them with food and sweets in order to eat them. Children tune into their “resource” status and understand that, just like in the tale, their parents domesticate them by offering them food and approval in return for their lives to be consumed by the civilized order.

Apart from unhappiness, this threat of ontological cannibalism breeds pathological mistrust between people: adults mistrust each other; they mistrust their own children and children grow to mistrust everyone else. It is possible that a child's first sense of mistrust is directed at her own parents; looking at the bigger picture, this is of course rightly so. Love as the energy of creation, of transmission of a part of oneself to another, whether as personal creativity or cultural or biological reproduction, has consistently been

perverted. It is therefore not surprising that consumerist art, such as the work of Andy Warhol, would be chosen to represent contemporary experience: flat, compulsive and sterile.

On Love: The Question of Sex

Western doctors, the overseers of social “health,” urge parents to think about sexual relationships and career before pregnancy, during pregnancy and postpartum.

The highly complex phenomenon of sexual energy — that yearning for fulfilment and creative togetherness — is thus reduced to sexual intercourse for the sake of pleasure tantamount to the consumption of sterile, genetically modified food. Sterile sexuality is empty pleasure that has no possibility of creativity. This is not to say that sexual intercourse necessarily has to take place with the intention to reproduce. But when the idea of creation, whether artistic or biological, is *a priori* eliminated at any point of a union between two people, the physiological act itself breathes emptiness and death.

At the same time, the need to connect with someone for the expression of such creativity, the pleasure of creation sought in a union, can be misinterpreted as a sexual need, because in its basic sense, the act of creation gives the pleasure of satisfaction. The “market” can cash well on this urge, particularly when it is just almost satisfied and, hence, the capitalist “curriculum” promotes sterile sexuality in which the medical capitalist plays an important role.

In Montreal, I have spoken to seven doctors (three were male and four female) and seven female nurses, mostly from the CLSC, the centralized governmental health association that establishes clinics in every neighbourhood of the province of Quebec. All were shocked to hear that I nursed my child for over four years. I pointed out that even UNICEF stipulates nursing for *not* less than a year, preferably two, without supplements during the first six months, while anthropologist Katherine Dettwyler, editor of *Breastfeeding: Biocultural Perspectives*, offers a wider span for nursing human babies that ranges from a minimum of two-and-a-half-years to a maximum of seven. According to Dettwyler, in societies where children nurse as long as they want to, weaning takes place with no arguments or emotional trauma, between three and four years of age — which was exactly what my daughter did. On her website, Dettwyler says:

Another important consideration for the older child is that they are able to maintain their emotional attachment to a person rather than being forced to switch to an inanimate object such as a teddy bear or blanket. I think this sets the stage for a life of people-orientation, rather than materialism, and I think that is a good thing. (1997)

To return to my physician, doctor Janice's words express perfectly the opinions of the rest of my respondents:

Yes, the U.N. recommends that [minimum one year]. So, one year is enough. You should wean after that. Such abnormal nursing is bad for the family. The child will grow dependent, and nursing lowers the mother's sexual drive, which can cause problems in the family later on and will harm the baby. (Field notes, Montreal, August 2001)

Apart from the minimum standard being "good enough" for the child, this attitude touches on several other issues. First, it classifies as *abnormal* children's biological and psychological need for years of nursing. Second, it urges parents to reform the child's natural dependence on their presence, because civilization needs people who believe that they are independent of their world and that cruelty and abandonment are an expression of love. Third, it expects the child and the mother to adapt their nature to male sexual standards, rather than vice versa. Democracy, which is a totalitarianism of numbers, does not apply in this case. Finally, this makes sense politically and economically, for socialized sexuality consumes sexy attire, makeup, specialized foods, diets, drinks, contraceptives, cars, furniture, entertainment, ad infinitum.

But is all of this really ineluctable?

On Making Things: Questions of Respect

Having been inspired among others by Korchack and Nikitins, Sasha and I interpreted "love" in the wild sense and chose, first of all, to be "there" for our daughter, Ljuba, which meant being less "out there" in the social world. This meant less money, living space, time and energy.

The decision forced us to rely on meagre supplies and sharpened our imagination and artisan skills. One such example is Ljuba's "town-house." In a previous existence, the second floor used to be a TV box. Ljuba hid inside it when she was a year and ten months old and said, "Ku-ku," shutting and opening the lid. I cut out windows, she decided where she wanted to have the door; we dug out colourful old rags and together patched a joyful mosaic on the outside. She painted the inside with pencils and crayons. The ground floor came later. Ljuba and her dad made it from the remains of the wood with which he had built our bed and wardrobe. She decorated it in bright acrylics and I "filled in the gaps." (Journal, autumn 2002)

The house has a meaning and a purpose. First, it serves as an outlet for spontaneous creativity, which we approached playfully yet seriously. Second, it is a sign of potency and independence from hierarchy: one can

create something almost from nothing, and that makes it different from the children's houses purchased in stores, because contrary to commercial toys that snatch everything from the environment, from the lives of the underpaid workers who make them, and from the working parents who purchase them, this house saved matter that would have gone to waste and making it brought us together. Creativity can be simultaneously aesthetic and practical.

The house has become Ljuba's hiding place, her possibility for seclusion. While she uses the whole apartment as hers, she also knows that she shares it with others. In fact, she relies on the knowledge that she can always find someone somewhere, be it in the kitchen, the living room, the office or the bathroom; even her room — someone might always knock or she, herself, may call one of us in. However, her little house, dancing with sunny colours, is outside our reach. She trusts our respect for her privacy. At the root of this respect lives our love. (ibid.)

In other words, spaces of wilderness are places of introspection, of privacy, of trust, of relationships and of respect. Because these spaces exist for their own purpose and are in constant dialogue with the unpredictable yet viable chaos that is life, humans must learn to trust wilderness, including their own and that of their children. To do that, we have to learn how to feel at home in the world with the world and to acknowledge that the dangerous stranger is not the mythical predator "out there" but the domesticated dream inside of us.

On Using Things: Questions of Trust and Respect

We decided to give Ljuba the trust and opportunity to decide in all the spheres of her experience, such as to train herself to be wise, confident, strong and independent, sometimes testing our own principles. The Skripalev sports complex that we installed in her room illustrates this relationship.

We brought a sports complex with us from Russia, and it is also very easy to make from scratch. It has rings, a rope ladder, a wooden ladder, a fixed ladder, a swinging ladder, a rope, an elastic liana, a swinging gymnast's bar, a fixed bar and the slide which leads to her bunk bed. Ljuba had this sports complex since she was four months old, and the only rule regarding its use has been the same that the Nikitins used in their home: namely, no interference from adults with suggestions or help to reach something that the child cannot do by herself. This way she can only do what she is ready for. By the age of three, Ljuba could climb anywhere and could reach any spot in the room without touching the floor. When her friends come,

we do not allow the parents to come in and “help” their children. Even though many children are weak and unable to support their own body weight with their arms and swing, they learn quickly how and where to climb and when the time comes for them to leave, most parents have difficulty retrieving them from under the ceiling. (Journal, summer 2003)

This too is a question of relationship between parents and child, for it is not the sports complex by itself that helps Ljuba grow into a mature and confident child. The complex is only an artificial substitute for the endless possibilities offered by forests, riverbank slopes, country house roofs, and so forth, of which we are denied in our city existence, particularly in a Western setting, where the underdeveloped public transportation infrastructure, hefty fees, private property laws and the destruction of natural habitat render space and wilderness inaccessible for many.¹² However, our approach to the object, to the meanings attached to this object and to the limitations or the liberties that we ascribe to our child point to who we are.

Our trust does not end there. We took the Nikitins’ advice and extended it to Ljuba’s decision making with regard to other aspects of her life, such as toilet training (at three weeks), nursing or her decision to visit her babushka in Russia without her mom.

On Things: Questions of Mistrust

Since the 1950s in Soviet Russia, Lena Nikitina and Boris Nikitin have been sounding the alarm that children are weakened both morally and physically by contemporary parenting methods. Children’s most vicious enemy, the Nikitins said, is adults’ mistrust that begins with holding the child when she walks, helping her up when she falls, forbidding her to climb “dangerous” stairs even on the children’s playground marked “for use between 0–3 years old,” picking her up and sticking her on the slide, constantly telling her what to do, wear, eat, feel, know and think, in other words, constantly exercising control. Just as politicians speak on behalf of adults, represent them and control them, mistrust also reveals itself when adults speak for the child, putting words in her mouth, branding, evaluating, “helping” and “teaching” her. Finally, it takes the form of siding with the institution in the endeavour to reconstruct the child from a curious individual to an obedient consumer of things and of instruction.

This is commonly referred to as “protective” behaviour, and, at first glance, may seem harmless, even benign. However, this is an expression of domesticated methodologies that retard the physical, emotional and mental development, since being shielded or severed from the wild world, the child learns to forfeit her right to learn to trust her own abilities and limitations. The absence of those inner mechanisms of self-regulation creates outright

danger. It makes children vulnerable and dependent on the domesticated structure. Moreover, mistrust sends children the following message: adults treat anyone smaller and weaker than themselves as frail, handicapped, even insipid — have you heard that baby-talk intonation? People call such behaviour “protective,” “caring” and “loving.” Since this is love, many children learn to suppress their frustration and to accept others’ control over their lives and their own failure. Later, they reproduce this love, care and protection with those younger than themselves, as well as with their own parents, by then grown old, child-like and frail, thereby continuing the cycle. In reality, nursing, co-sleeping and respect is protective behaviour.

The Nikitins call for trusting the child, providing her with an emotionally safe and enriching environment rather than limitations and control. Trust fosters curiosity, creativity and confidence to the extent that parents would not need consumerism to replace family relations, because an independent child will know how to make toys, invent games or find answers to questions about the self and the world. There is an important distinction to make, however, between trust and neglect, or in other words, between self-chosen independence or self-reliance and imposed neglect that is concealed by slaving parent substitutes, misleading vocabulary, acquired things, and civilized relationships. For instance, one of the most popular child psychologists, Françoise Dolto, conflates love with capitalist consumerism and predation when she advises parents to pay children for household chores in order to help them become financially autonomous and conscientious workers. This confusion of concepts was further revealed at the Childhoods 2005 conference in Oslo, when numerous presentations focused on the “positive” aspects of consumerism and called for the participation of children in this sphere — they equated participation in consumerism with “empowerment” and “independence.”

However, the problem is that a child receiving a few dollars for washing the dishes does not learn independence, rather the contrary: the lesson is to succumb to the will of others, to provide *them* services in return for a reward set by the more powerful. In this case, the child does not do the dishes because she uses them or to participate on equal terms in family life. She does them for a materialistic end in order to obtain something from materialistic parents. It reinforces the stupidifying culture of specialization of labour in return for symbolic capital without which one could not eat or live. It goes without saying that having children do school work for grades and for the promise of material bliss in the “future” is part of the same strategy that markets obedience, consumerism, misery and mistrust. This is a strategy that shuffles meanings, sells 500 mL of juice in 750 mL bottles, markets chemical smells as berries and fruit, substitutes bright packages of favourite monsters on TV with yogourt derived from raped cows and chemical laboratories, and so on. In all of this, instead of siding with their children and protecting them, parents end up being the prime vehicles of civilized meaning.

On Issues That Objectify: Trust in Institution

The problem of trust extends to everything that touches a person's life. What, who, why, how and when can we trust concerns not only our quality of life but, on a primordial level, our very survival. Trust and mistrust are part of a complex process of whom we identify as "stranger" and the way we react to others. Civilization presents "authority" as protectors and "resources" as danger. Parents internalize this paradigm both as *habitus* and as *body hexis* in their choices of whom to trust or mistrust.

One Tuesday in July 2004, Ljuba (five years old) and I had an appointment with her friends at a playground at 4 pm. To take advantage of a lovely day outdoors, we arrived an hour early. "Ljuba, Ljuba," we heard someone shout from the slides and saw her friend, Celine (also five) waving. Celine was out with her kindergarten group. Ljuba joined them, but in ten minutes, the teachers rounded up the daycare kids and went back to school.

"Don't worry, Ljuba," I comforted her. "In less than an hour, you'll see Celine." We left the playground to wash our hands and eat our lunch, returning at least thirty minutes after the kindergarten was gone. I took out my knitting while Ljuba went to play in the sand when suddenly a woman approaches us with a screaming boy.

"Whose child is this?"

His face was so distorted with distress that I failed to recognize him at first. Then I saw that it was Todd, Celine's 3-year-old brother. "How did you end up here," I asked. "Bwwwwwwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa" was the heartbreaking reply. The woman who had found him said he was screaming for at least twenty minutes and she could not make sense of what he said. When Todd realized that Ljuba and I were there, he cheered up and just as he began to play, a panic-stricken daycare teacher appeared, looking for a forgotten child.

"Did he stay behind with you?" she asked me.

"No, we didn't even know he was out with this group. We just found him here," I replied and was wondering how the neglectful daycare workers were going to present this to Todd's parents.

Soon after the incident, we see Karen, Arnold and the kids. "So, you kept Todd behind at the playground," was their greeting. The kindergarten didn't even bother to make up a story that would not contradict my testimony. I should also mention that this neighbourhood is considered to be a prestigious part of Montreal and the kindergarten one of the best daycares.

I got the impression that the parents were annoyed that I had witnessed a serious bluff by the prestigious institution to which they felt they belonged. I explained to them that we did not even know

that Todd was with the group, that we found him at least half-an-hour after the kindergarten was gone and that, in fact, he was found by a stranger. Karen, however, interrupted me briskly and pressed with the kindergarten's version.

In the choice whom to trust, Karen and Arnold made the decision in favour of the institution. Not only that, they made it as if they *were* that institution. As parents, they did not want to get in conflict with the kindergarten. As part of that institution, they wanted to convince me, a witness to the institution's blunder, of its competence.

"Well, errors happen," insisted Karen. "So they forgot him for a few minutes..."

"More than thirty," I interjected.

"No, it wasn't thirty minutes, it was two minutes. I know. They told me they went back immediately when they realized they had left him with you," persisted Karen.

"Actually, they don't know us, so they didn't leave him with us. Plus, how do you know at what point their realization came? They probably realized that they were missing him when they were getting the kids ready to be picked up by the parents. And, do you think that between me and them, I have more reasons to lie about what happened?"

"I don't know why you insist on slandering them. All I know is that Laurel said that as soon as they reached the kindergarten, she realized Todd was missing and ran back immediately and it couldn't have been more than five or ten minutes."

Todd's suffering, for whatever number of minutes, and the danger to which he had been exposed did not seem to shake his parents' faith in their prestigious institution.

One of the difficulties in anthropology is also its strong asset, namely, the extent to which we can take a specific example, even if it may seem anomalous, and generalize it to the extent of claiming to understand society better. In the example above, one can say that, "Well, statistically it is not frequent that kindergartens forget kids behind; this is an exception and hopefully it will teach Laurel and her colleagues to be more vigilant in the future." What the above incident exposes, though, is the general aspect of human-institutional relations, which means that even when the abstract and the general become concrete and personal, the institution has been incorporated into the self to the point that an individual would think and live through it and on behalf of it at the expense of personal instincts. Even if personal reactions to the incident may vary — some people would scream at Laurel, others might sue or pull their kids out of the school only to place them in the same institution elsewhere — the child is still surrendered to the institution of predation,

regardless of whether it teaches us to fear the predator and to justify its own predatory system by this very fear it instils.

The question of trust is multifaceted. Some of its aspects are revealed in situations of conflict between the child and educator, where parents mostly side with the institution: they trust doctors, teachers and psychiatrists with questions ranging from toilet training to antipsychotic drugs, rarely pausing to ask the child's opinion or to listen to what the "medical" symptoms might be revealing about the context of family relations. Instead of listening to the child's scream of despair, parents side with the "professional" and read the symptoms of disorder as medical conditions to be remedied by "professionals" according to "professional" norms and requirements that aim at manufacturing a docile child who will be manageable for the troupe of overseers of social order and capitalist interests.

Karen and Arnold's choice of whom to trust is stimulated economically: they want/need to earn money and do not want/need to keep their children at home like some home-learners do, who are either rich and can "afford it" or are really "poor" because of the sacrifices society imposes on those who choose to raise their own kids. Karen and Arnold also want to accumulate the symbolic capital that comes from having a child that belongs to a prestigious institution. There is more to their story, however. Trust in authority comes, not only as a rational choice, but as an irrational reflex undermining the basic parental instinct that normally would prompt parents to protect their offspring — including from strangers, who the nursery and kindergarten employees really are. When we give our trust to a children's institution, we inevitably strip it away from the child, which points to an inherent dichotomy between the interests of a child and those of the institution in charge of children. Here, we touch on a general trend of contemporary civilized society, where, paradoxically, through individual greed, the institution dumbs it down to totalitarian obedience.

On the Study of Things: Phenomenology et al.

Desire is an excellent tool of control over people and of profit for the few who can manipulate the masses into needing things. In this way, everything — from the setting of a room to what we eat and do — is part of a person's relationship with the world. Needs and desires are used to coerce people into conducting specific services in order to be able to obtain the money to buy the objects of desire. In this sense, people also acquire the status of objects. The invention of money made it possible for some people to control the lives, effort, work and consumption habits of others, namely, to dictate to them what to purchase and where, and how to spend time. Hence, on the one hand, when one makes one's own things and uses them moderately and wisely, things can be assets in enhancing independence and freeing time, yet at the same time, they pose an inherent danger to creativity and independence.

Objects and habitat can thus be slippery “texts” — for, interpretation always obeys the common and uncommon senses of the beholder.

It is like two neighbours with two identical Jeeps: Jill has the car in order to camp in what's left of the forest, while Jack keeps it in order to improve his social status. He gives up many occasions for travel so as not to increase mileage and even sustains himself in order to service and maintain the vehicle. Both Jack and Jill may be seen every Sunday afternoon scrupulously washing and oiling their respective Jeeps in their respective backyards. Behind exchanged greetings, they both may harbour a warm feeling of sharing something together that others, who do not spend their Sunday afternoons in love and gratitude with their Jeeps, may not understand. However, are the relationships, rationale, methods, consequences or feelings the same, in spite of their similar contribution to the car industry and global capitalism? Jill beautifies her car after three days of adventure and life in the wilderness — including the effects this has on the forests she tramps, on the labour markets of the “developing” world that makes the Jeep possible for her, on the oil fields of the Middle East, and on the disappearing wildlife. On the other hand, Jack rubs his Jeep in order to keep out the rust, to touch and dust his beloved with tenderness — this Jeep that adorns his self and which by its mere existence provides his life with meaning. What is this meaning?

It is interesting to note that the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches have taken root in Occidental thought at a time when industrialization has made things overabundant and people overdependent on things. Phenomenology could thus be a tricky method unless the investigator uses it most cautiously in order to reveal the dyslexic, schizophrenic and contradictory nature of civilized relationships between people, meaning and objects.¹³ Hence, an attempt to elucidate how and why a person would acquire or use a particular object can point to the semantics of living with objects, people and the environment, while the mischievous objects themselves remain slyly deaf, dumb and numb.

My concern is to take the study of objects beyond its current scope and the status quo of the illusory progress of humanity and the material evolution of things in order to find other possible ways of living with children, humans and the world. This entails ending our dependence on things and relying on relationships of life, recycling and making what we need ourselves. When we spend time and effort making our own things, we make only what is necessary, mostly of recycled matter, and do not need to exploit the natural and human “resources” in order to buy superfluous things, an act that makes some people even wealthier and most others tragically devoid of any possibility for love in any sense. For, when one is constantly bugged for time or is otherwise hungry, what love can such a person give?

Tragically, however, most social scientists, educators, media, politicians and others continue to use terms that foster negative impressions of people

and societies where things are scarce. They call them "poor," "primitive" and "developing," and in naming them as such perpetuate the values and cultivate the desire for the possession of things. In addition to deprivation, poverty has been invented as the stress and pressure to possess. It is this stress and pressure that make industrialism and capitalism flourish, since once people are robbed of their time and the possibility for independence, they turn into workers and consumers.

Therefore, an attempt to answer the question of what makes people want to acquire things inevitably leads to the question of self, relationships and love. However, we must look at all these elements in a different light, something other than the simplistic formula of, "I want therefore I love," or vice versa. The trade-off involved — in the bargain of wanting and ceding and in the schizophrenic use of terminology — reveals the extent of our reliance on linguistic and social structures that control us by imposing specific behaviour and desires. In simple words, love, objects and objectifications point to fundamental ways of existence.

Finally: On Love, Objects and Objectifications

No work can avoid touching on politics, particularly one that discusses desires, objects and love. We live in a world where even the size of one's foot becomes an economic, and therefore political, issue. The amount of foot paraphernalia that can be made, advertised and sold is astounding — Nike versus Adidas versus self-made boots, or the less standard the size of the foot, the more expensive the shoes, and so on. However, love is the easiest merchandise and, concurrently, an excellent political and economic tool in a global hierarchy, a pyramid of those who sell, buy and control with the millions at the bottom who carry the pyramid on their backs and who still buy and consume what the industrialist/capitalist provides, ironically with their own labour and sacrifices. In this way, the setting of one's abode is part of the relationship that a person forms with her world and the question of trust, respect and love veils the discrepancies in the meaning and application of these notions.

Even the so-called charity or aid programmes perpetuate dependence. In the summer of 2005 in Montreal, a charity organization was raising money to serve better meals at schools in "disadvantaged neighbourhoods." The word "disadvantaged" conveys passivity on the part of the poor and is actually a euphemism for "abused by civilized society." Evidently, abused children need more and better food. However, such endeavours not only refuse to question the very existence of schooling, poverty or alienation, they present them as positive and kind, as charity. Not only do charity and philanthropy constitute administrative tactics of parasitic relationships, they deny the "disadvantaged" parents and children the power to make their own decisions as to what, when and where to consume and to decide what is good

for them.¹⁴ It is never the intention of charity or philanthropy to eradicate poverty and disempowerment. Hence, it would be unthinkable to simply give these families money to decide for themselves what to eat and when, or to establish equal salaries for everyone, which also means to value the effort recompensed with the pesos or the rouble on par with the dollar or the euro. In fact, usually more funds go into paying the project administrator salaries than the “charity” itself and charity ensures that the poor also depend on consuming what the system deems fit for them to consume, managing them within the purposefully circumscribed space of tragedy and despair. Finally, the poor and the wealthy, together, abandon their children in the despotic colonialism of the institution, where some become predators and others obedient prey. In this light, Karen and Arnold’s reaction to Todd’s abandonment by the school does not come as a surprise. Long before the school abandoned Todd, they, themselves, had abandoned him in the race for material and symbolic wealth.

To return to the beginning, Korchak’s example shows a different approach to love. He does not objectify the “object” of his love nor does he replace “it” with objects or contradictory meanings. The semantic meaning of his words remains consistent with his actions. He said that he would not abandon these children and he stayed with them even in vanishing — a presence that is no longer physically seen or known. He is actively present, even in death, and thus fulfils his promise of love.

In this war against wilderness, is death the only way left to love?

In civilization, it is. However, a child is born wild and it takes years of hard work to turn her into a “human,” while, if left alone, it takes no time at all for her to go feral. But, because a child is born dependent on her parents for care, she finds herself at their mercy. Since domesticated parents are already entangled in this hierarchical structure — their interests vested in its order of resources and enmeshed in a chain of exploitative, domesticated relationships — in this system, dependence itself is constructed as weakness and weakness is viewed as something to be exploited. Predation becomes part of the *doxa*, the understood and unarticulated knowledge that constructs children as the parents’ own “human resources.” In this sense, the child’s dependence on her producers and carers becomes a useful tool in pedagogy, a system of domestication of children’s wildness by means of punishment and reward, trapping the child in a narrative of despair in which any reward, however small, becomes a source of agency. The child learns how to be content and find in this lack of freedom a sense of empowerment by serving the needs and the whims of those in charge. To become human or civilized, the child thus undergoes a process of programming referred to as “education,” where her wilderness is tamed by carrot and whip as she submits to the sterile dream of death. The next chapter, “On Modernism and Education,” examines how a specific rendering of time, mortality and

death has been woven into the very foundation of civilization and, by extension, of children's institutions.

Notes

1. From the biographical note to the Russian edition of *How to Love a Child* by Janush Korchak (1990).
2. The media is full of these "scandals." For instance, see the article in *The Guardian* by Angelique Chrisafis, Friday, 11 November 2011 <www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/11/dominique-strauss-kahn-prostitution-scandal>.
3. An Associated Press investigation found "more than 2,500 cases over five years in which educators were punished for actions from bizarre to sadistic. There are 3 million public school teachers nationwide, most devoted to their work. Yet the number of abusive educators — nearly three for every school day — speaks to a much larger problem in a system that is stacked against victims. Most of the abuse never gets reported. Those cases reported often end with not action. Cases investigated sometimes can't be proven, and many abusers have several victims. And no one — not the schools, not the courts, not the state or federal governments — has found a surefire way to keep molesting teachers out of classrooms" (Irvine and Tanner: 2007).

Also noteworthy is the case of Selwyn House, a private school in Westmount, Montreal, that ignored parents' concerns for nearly twenty years that their children were being molested by the school's geography teacher, Leigh Seville (CBC News: 2008).

In terms of abuse in the home, the examples are endless and include lifetime estimates of sexual abuse of children, which in some studies go as high as 40 percent for females and 13 percent for males (Douglas and Finkelhor 2004).

4. See Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002) *Global Woman*; Bonnie Fox (1980) *Hidden in the Household*; Nona Granda (1996) *Uneven Gains: Filipina Domestic Workers in Canada*; Nicola Piper (2003) *Wife or Worker? Asian Women and Migration*; Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadow of Affluence*, among others.
5. See Arias (2010) "United States Life Tables, 2006" in *National Vital Statistics Report*. <cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr58/nvsr58_21.pdf>.
6. See the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics' *Expectation of Life and Expected Deaths by Race, Sex, and Age: 2006*. <census.gov/compendia/statab/2010/tables/10s0105.pdf>.
7. Sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation run highest in this group. Arnold Schwarzenegger's taking advantage of Mildred Baena is only one example among many. In recent years, feminist research has been focusing on the gendered migration and sexual exploitation of third-world women coming to replace the upwardly mobile, mostly white and middle-class women. Research demonstrates that there is a direct link between the industrialization of production and that of reproduction. Child bearing, child rearing, the making of things, sexual intercourse, pleasures and suffering, everything in this system of things acquires a value and undergoes adjustment following the categories of the "resources" and the "market" regulated price of their relationships. Also, see above endnote 4.
8. See above endnotes 4 and 7.

9. The “Global North” in immigration studies includes all the rich countries like Australia (technically in the Global South), as well as the dubiously placed Turkey, Israel and Saudi Arabia — all of these countries are known to rely on imported, racialized and gendered home- and care- labour. The United Nations considers 57 countries in the “Global North,” countries whose Human Development Index is above .8 as based on the World Bank’s differentiation according to economic performance.
10. Statistics Canada <statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-577-XIE/children.htm>.
11. In the period between 1999–2001, I made a comparative survey on Russian and Canadian children’s playgrounds, where I would ask parents what they thought love was. I chose parents’ and children’s places on purpose in order to see if having children would shift the common association of the word “love” with sexual partnership. Inevitably, almost all the Russian parents began with a Tolstoyan description of emotions towards the universe, God, sometimes, humanity, followed by lover and kin. Almost all the anglophone and francophone parents on the playgrounds in Quebec and Ontario responded that they believed in love at first sight and in having a good sexual understanding with their partner, which demonstrated that the understanding of “love” as sexual gratification before all other meanings remained intact.
12. For example, the *petit train du nord* used to be a railway service that connected the north of Quebec with Montreal. The car industry destroyed the railway and was the catalyst for the construction of *two* highways. The railway was recently turned into a paid bicycle path.
13. The term “schizophrenia” comes from Greek, meaning “split mind,” which refers to the condition when a person is “split from reality.”
14. Like Gatto argues in *The Underground History of American Education*, in *Schooled to Order*, David Nasaw presents a historical account of the role of class and “philanthropy” in the creation of a public system of education in order to create obedient workers who are easy to exploit, manipulate and control.

On Modernism and Education

The Birth of Contemporary Domesticated Pedagogies

The Nature of Mind Destruction

One had to cram all this stuff into one's mind, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect that, after I had passed the final examination, I found the consideration of any scientific problems distasteful to me for an entire year.... It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail. It is a very grave mistake to think that the enjoyment of seeing and searching can be promoted by means of coercion and a sense of duty. (Einstein 2007: 346)

If one were to compare the principles of learning and child development with the social reality to which the methods of education are supposed to respond and then with the reality that these methods create, a shrewd observer would notice a persistent contradiction between words and deeds, between goals and ends, or between hopes and reality.

Most people today believe that schooling is necessary and indispensable. When asked why they think so, they explain that without school, children will not learn how to live in this world and therefore they will not learn how to let others live — the eternal question of socialization. Most often, when pressed to define their language (*world, live, learn*, etc.), supporters of schooling answer that “everybody knows that you can’t get a job without education and how can you survive without a job?”

Why?

“Because everybody does this and so everybody knows.”

In other words, we are dealing with the irrational internalization of institutional thought and fear.

Fear compels parents to accept suffering as the norm and to inflict it on children by forcing them to accept abandonment as love, because someone told the parents that children have to be socialized in order to learn how to obey in order to get a job. A method that instills in parents the belief that their children’s screaming when left alone in the hands of strangers in schools is crucial for their “independence” demands that the parents lose their ability to commiserate with their own kin. Lack of empathy with the children’s

terror and pain is the first lesson of school. The agenda of schooling and of “civilized” parenting is to kill the instinct that prompts people to respond to others’ suffering and to protect their children who need empathy and compassion in order to learn how to care about others and their world. Evidently, the goal of standardized civilized curriculum is to kill and destroy rather than to harmonize and preserve, because, just like their parents, apathy is the first lesson that children learn in school.

Then there is the method itself: repetition. One does not need to repeat endlessly in order to learn something that makes sense or that is logical according to the theory of life. Repetition and dressage become necessary where things do not make sense; namely, when access to food and resources are artificially and deliberately cut off and when arbitrary laws separate the majority of the people from land and sea because someone wants to extort material and other profit from these people and from the land and the sea. If people need to learn that they will die if they do not serve the interests of the owners of food and resources, then these people need to be taught by repetition the illogical truth that they will die unless they learn the tricks of servitude. These people have to go to school.

Ultimately, then, a society whose legal or social dictates deny its people the freedom to choose how and what to learn and how to live their lives is referred to as dictatorial or totalitarian. In such a society, harmony means the acceptance of murder on a spiritual level as well: the murder of the self, of personal initiative and of the sense of freedom for a purpose that under dictatorship gets defined by someone else and not by the self. In a free, natural, wild society, the self obeys the rules that govern the possibilities of life in a variety of forms and species. Harmony in the wild world means diversity and life. The same term in the civilized society spells death. This dissonance between goals, reality and meaning permeates all the levels of civilized epistemology and society. For instance, in addressing high mortality rates among the exploited human and nonhuman people, the civilized do not work to eradicate the root of poverty and oppression; rather, they come up with solutions that treat the symptoms and further domesticate the people and their environment. These medical and scientific solutions, however, ranging from vaccinations to pesticides, have dire repercussions on viability and only exacerbate the problem and threaten all of existence.

The disharmony between civilized people and their reality manifests itself in the large numbers of people who, sometimes starting from conception, fail to cope with civilization and are consequently medicated in order to alleviate their physical and psychological dysfunctions and to recycle them into the work force. The rates of crime, suicide, allergies, madness, war, poverty and misery point to the inability of civilization to fulfil its promise of harmony as sympathy and compatibility with the world. Yet, civilization claims that education in the form of official and organized schooling is indispensable,

because it allegedly provides tools and skills that are essential for “successful” life in this world. But, what is the reality that we are being sold as inevitable and what are those tools and skills that we believe to be indispensable?

In this chapter, I analyse the basis of contemporary education. By education, I mean the methods of socializing and institutionalizing a person that span the period from infancy through university, that is, any social institution that claims to have the right to impose civilized knowledge and transmit essential skills to members of its society.

Contemporary globalized education derives its method from the culture that originated in Western Europe that conquered and stifled other Indigenous values and methods of cultural transmission around the world. The goal of European colonialists was to impose the socio-economic structure of civilized Europe. In other words, successful civilization of conquered lands meant the successful imposition of monoculturalism at the service of Europeans. That is why European history is an important part of the syllabus that focuses on European victories around the world: Alexander the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, European travellers, the obelisks in Paris and Washington D.C., ad infinitum, are expected to be known in Kentucky and in Kampala, in Vladivostok and in Jakarta — everywhere in the world.

Victory is when one party overpowers another. When one party emerges victorious, it means that it has implemented successfully the various tactics of ruse, threat and violence leading to the enemy’s capitulation and subordination. The method and logic of the winner become the essential part of the syllabus transmitted to future generations with regards to the “successful” tactics of domestication, colonialism and education. In more than one sense, therefore, the methods used in education respond to the needs of colonization and reflect the tactics of war. Schools are thus unsafe places because their very essence promotes the logic of conquest and war. The growing numbers of bullying incidents, suicides and school shootings around the world reflect this logic of war and, in fact, are often tacitly sanctioned by the system itself.

Author John Whitehead describes some of the shootings in detail, the resemblance of which to military operations is uncanny. For instance,

on October 10, 2006, a 13-year-old seventh grade boy, apparently fascinated with the 1999 Columbine High School bloodbath, carried an assault rifle into his Joplin, Missouri, middle school. Dressed in a dark green trench coat and wearing a mask, he pointed the rifle at fellow students and fired a shot into the ceiling before the weapon jammed. This was no spur-of-the-moment act. It was a planned attack. The student’s backpack contained military manuals, instructions on assembling an improvised explosive device and detailed drawings of the school. Moments before he fired the rifle, the boy said to a school administrator, “Please don’t make me do this.”

The outbreak of school shootings that have taken place over the past two decades has forced school officials, public leaders and parents to search for ways to prevent further bloodshed. In their attempts to make the schools safer, students have been forced to deal with draconian zero tolerance policies, heightened security, routine locker checks, guard dogs, metal detectors and numerous other invasions of their property and privacy.

Despite the precautions (all of which have proven to be altogether ineffective), other student-led shooting sprees and bloodshed followed. (Whitehead 2012)

What is evident here is that this is not simply a question of legality of guns. As the various examples from China and the U.K. demonstrate, mass murders in kindergarten and schools can be carried out with a knife.¹ The crux of the problem resides in the legitimacy of the mentality of war and the fact that this war is directed against one's own immediate environment, just as the narrative of domestication dictates. It is the same kind of trauma and violence that is expressed in the high rates of suicide in Scandinavia, Korea and Japan, where the theatre of war takes place in the body and the self of the domesticated child.

According to a June 2009 study, 15 percent of American high school students believe they will die before the age of thirty-five — a perspective strongly linked to risky behaviour. Activities related to such a pessimistic view of the future include attempting suicide, using illegal drugs, sustaining fight-related injuries that require medical care, engaging in unprotected sex, being arrested by the police, and contracting HIV (ibid.).

One such war “indoctrination” method is grading the students’ “learning content” thereby policing thought processes and creating a panopticon psychology that characterizes postindustrial society. The method itself constitutes an indispensable component of a curriculum of violence that aims to obtain the opponent’s subordination and the eradication of her wilderness. In this sense, particularly during the earlier years, grades tell more about the one who grades than about the one being graded. Some educational policies, however, still refuse to grade children until their final years of schooling. For instance, in Finland, children are not graded until their final year and have no high-stakes testing. This was also the practice in Sweden up until 2011. In both countries, children start school at an older age than in the rest of the world, and throughout the schooling, the emphasis is on improvement rather than on what has been retained. These strategies yield healthier human beings than the systems that focus on evaluating the person as is, because they account for growth and change. Nonetheless, these are still speciesist pedagogies rooted in humanism and domestication and their end result is the same even if the extent and the pace are different. It is like

comparing organically fed and free-range cattle to industrial farming: the former have healthier and less stressful lives than the latter, but they all end up executed and consumed.

In the education systems that focus on grading, grades are seen as belonging to the sphere of the natural — the organic methods of evaluating the organic possibilities of an organic person — and that without them, the education systems cannot regulate and stimulate learning and development. In this respect, praise and reward act in collusion with the penalty of death by starvation, stifling, imprisonment, violence or whatever other negative reinforcement methods that schooling has devised to breed docility and, at the same time, deadly competitiveness. These goals of education are particularly flagrant among the poor and the public schools in poor neighbourhoods, because poverty dehumanizes yet leaves the victim without wilderness. Left naked, hungry and angry, with “resources” and space denied to them, the poor human resources can harm only themselves and bicker only among themselves, since no invitation to the bacchanalia of capitalist success has been extended to them.²

On Learning and Love

Most Americans don't really like children ... even their own! Adults don't trust youngsters, and school is an institutional expression of that fact. To put it another way, one of the foundation stones on which schools rest is a great big rock that says children are mostly no damn good. I know that's true ... I've spent a lot of time observing how society treats children. Look, I could give you a ten-hour interview entirely on the subject of adults' feelings towards young people, but let me tell you just one tiny example. I recently read a construction design manual that was full of surveys showing buyers' preferences concerning townhouses and clustered housing. And the number-one concern of potential owners was that they not live in a place where they could hear the sounds of children playing. They weren't talking about the noises of youngsters smashing bottles or having gang fights with zip guns, mind you ... no, the buyers queried were objecting simply to the sounds of children having a good time together. (Holt quoted in Gilman: 1984)

Any production, ideal or material, cultural or mundane, depends on the forces that drive individuals to reproduce their species; for, the production of ideas and objects is possible only through the reproduction of bodies, minds and souls that carry forth their meaning. Even the seemingly self-evident objects such as a table or a spoon first had to be invented as a need, then made, and finally understood as table or spoon in order to be used as table or spoon in, say, the European meaning of the thing. Things

become much less self-evident when they concern objects such as diapers, computers, art, purses, toilet seats, etc., or intangible things and cultural practices. In this sense, both our selves and our creations — our culture — can ensure survival only if meaning and knowledge are transmitted to the generations that come.

Our very existence thus owes to a combination of forces that include the physical, biological, mental, emotional and other elements known and unknown to us that hold us together in the form and experience of a human being. The initial force that pushes us to create and procreate is the desire to do so regardless of our mortality, or perhaps because of it. But even mortality had to be reinvented and redefined under civilization to impose a sense of urgency in the cracks between the now domesticated time and space. The primordial wild desire to help life prevail regardless of us underlies certain emotions driving the living being to give the most of oneself — knowing that what we give will remain with this other self that we help come into a world we will eventually leave behind. This includes imparting one's time, effort, genes, blood, emotions, material and nonmaterial heritage such as knowledge, language and dispositions. In other words, we leave them the world.

These forces of giving and creating are at the core of the sentiment that many languages designate as "love." This definition of love is antithetical to the same term used in Western languages, which Freud — as a perspicacious observer of Western culture and values — defines as the desire to possess the object of personal gratification (1961). Since the sentiment that drives a living being to give and to create gives the feeling of gratification, sometimes any feeling of gratification can be mistaken for love. Freud's definition of this term is a perfect illustration of such confusion. Semantically, the term "love" retains its original positive value and connotations, while in practice civilization substitutes giving with taking or possessing. Thus, the forces that prompt "life" have been replaced in civilization with those that prompt "death" — since whatever we keep and fail to transmit dies within us as memory and with us as meaning.

Literacy and historical monuments are an attempt to overcome this problem of death. Research in various fields, such as history, paleoanthropology and linguistics, among others, reveals a strong interconnection between literacy, domination of minds and bodies, the emergence of the capitalist mode of thinking about human relations in terms of product yield and social capital, and the environment, which in civilization is agricultural and domesticated. The technologies of writing, the body itself of a text, and the technologies of dissemination — or in the case of elite knowledge, technologies for the monopoly of texts and valuable information — collaborate to make capital and agency inaccessible to resources. These technologies play a critical role in educating people to relinquish the diverse mutual relationships of wilderness and accept instead egocentric, monoculturalist domestication.

For instance, in *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (1977) and later in *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (1986), Jack Goody observes that, in the written records that have survived from ancient times, financial and administrative lists predominate over scientific, literary and other texts, which indicates that the initial intent in literacy was to establish “relationships of dependence” and not a search for “higher truth.” Technically, literate cultures are different from oral societies, where individuals memorize their personal, political and economic transactions in a context of relationships “perhaps with the aid of witnesses, where the transfer establishes a specific relationship of credit or debt rather than a generalized one of dependence” (Goody 1986: 104). The lists that Goody cites deal specifically with the administration of financial debts, prices, yield and so on, and have emerged in hierarchical societies where the majority produced for the profit of the owners — in different epochs, “owners” went by different names: lords, merchants, aristocrats, courtly administrators, entrepreneurs, etc.

While it is not self-evident whether literacy came in response to the mutation that occurred in the human brain, which suddenly shifted from the wildness mode to that of domestication and ownership, or whether it caused the shift, Goody explains that writing as the “technology of the intellect” was responsible for the crystallization of civilization in its current form. He explains that

by discussing mechanisms as well as differences, I have tried to map out an approach to the problem of cognitive processes, the “nature of human thought,” *l'esprit humain* (to use the formulae of Chomsky and Lévi-Strauss respectively), which attempts to take into account of the effects of differences in the mode of communication between and within human beings. (Goody 1977: 160)

In contrast to the living memory in oral traditions where each person constitutes a perpetually interactive text — as demonstrated in the stories about children at the beginning of this book — Goody argues that in literary societies, this technology of the intellect, or *l'esprit humain*, extracts and exteriorizes memory. Like lobotomy, the technology ensures that through amnesia we remain alien to the world and apathetic to the pain of others, be they the pigs we slaughter or the children we punish and leave crying. As a frequent collaborator with Goody, Walter Ong says:

Writing heightens consciousness. Alienation from a natural milieu can be good for us and indeed is in many ways essential for human life. To live and to understand fully, we need not only proximity but also distance. This writing provides for consciousness as nothing else does. (Ong 1982: 81)

The above articulates the very essence of the civilized position, since alienation allows us not to suffer when we choose to live off a system that constantly inflicts pain on millions of victims. Pain that should resonate sharp and loud through empathy not only becomes blunt, but disappears from the radar of the domesticator's knowledge because it is (re)presented as something else, even its opposite, and we have no way of knowing it, because our education ensures that we forget how to feel and teaches us to reason through abstraction, subtraction and symbolic representation. In other words, domestication teaches us to tune to the legitimate discourse on experience instead of embracing the experience itself.

The price of this alienation is a change in the very nature of civilized beings, for as the civilized began to distance themselves from their own selves and from the world, they began to undergo physiological, ontological and epistemological mutation. This change was aided by language (revealed in the research of Zerzan 2002 and Chomsky 1957 and 1972) and literacy (Goody and Watt 1963 and Ong 1986) thereby inducing physiological changes in the brain, which constitutes both a vital organ of agency and a locus for *doxa* and *habitus*. This organ serves as a locus for a motor that drives a person to interact with and act upon the environment in specific ways. In more than an abstract or symbolic manner, we thus express our domestication through our flesh. Accordingly, literacy has become the DNA of oppressive and concurrently oppressed brains, which by means of apathy and abstraction brought about a significant shift in the nature of intelligence causing serious deterioration in understanding, knowledge and relationships.

Literacy is a corollary of civilization and thus necessarily implicates relations of power that are intentionally engineered and proliferated through unintentional mechanisms such as language, education and texts, all of which render redundant human contact with their own history, each other and their world. However, since texts and monuments can be useful only when understood, the transmission of meaning remains vital and hence there is a constant battle between the forces of selfishness/gratification and the forces of giving/love. The victory in this battle has been inaugurated with the establishment of educational facilities as an institution.

To reiterate the above point, at the basis of life lie the forces of love and reproduction, while at the basis of personal gratification that prompts the desire to possess — which is the opposite of transmit — lie the forces of death. Education is the method of expressing and transmitting these forces of life and death — a method that promotes a specific culture and society. In contemporary globalized capitalist expression of civilization, it heeds the destructive forces because its logic is to separate children from parents, to “liberate” parents from children and thus to break the intimacy of their relationship. It inculcates a specific world view and hierarchy in order to create individualism that is falsely believed to be self-sufficient seeking constant

self-gratification through consumerism and the possession of living and nonliving objects of desire.

This contradiction between culture and nature becomes even more apparent if we consider the physiological development of living beings.

What, When and How Do People Learn

Ilya Arshavsky, a Soviet physiologist inspired by Kropotkin's anarchist theory of evolution and Dostoevsky's thought on morality, studied children's learning and human behaviour at the laboratory for developmental physiology, which he directed between 1935 and 1978 in Moscow. Even after the laboratory was shut down, he continued his research and publications until his death in 1996 at the age of ninety-three. In his work, he revealed the interdependent processes of learning and growth and he proposed a thermodynamic theory of individual development of organisms. His teacher Ukhtomsky's notion that living systems have variations of weight helped Arshavsky to identify the correlation between learning, movement and activity; the three elements that bring about the surplus anabolic processes resulting in an organism's growth and development.

Educational theorist Lena A. Nikitina (1998) discusses Arshavsky's findings in light of Ukhtomsky's notion of *dominanta*.

First, Nikitina cites the energetic rule of motion: "If I move, I grow. As long as I move, I live." This rule works because of the principle of surplus anabolism or the process of surplus restoration: when the energy storage is depleted, the organism recovers and stores more for future use. Hence, by reaching the limits of our capacity — that is, by using up our storage of energy — we increase it. This process affects muscle, bone and organ growth, including the brain. The reverse is atrophy.

The second rule states that in order for growth or learning to occur, the organism has to reach its maximal level of stress. However, this stress level should *always* stay within the limits of physiological stress that can only be determined and regulated from within and *never* from without. If stress stems from a source outside the organism, it can transform from the stress of pleasure to the negative stress of destruction whereby the organism can be crushed. In short, Nikitina translates this into: "With all my might but within the limits of pleasure."

Both of these rules are ignored in educational institutions where children are forced to sit and be quiet for unnatural lengths of time and whose bodies and selves are controlled by means of outside forces and curriculum. Furthermore, the processes that govern learning and growth include its organizational work, which Ukhtomsky calls *dominanta*. Nikitina explains that the *dominanta* is the main organizer of our brain. It concentrates all of the self towards the achievement of a particular task passing through four stages and requiring specific conditions.

- Stage 1: Excitement — the *dominanta* collects resources, concentration, energy, memory and creativity for a specific task and mostly works with nerves.
- Stage 2: The domains of the brain that are not needed for the specific task slow down or even switch off (i.e., they stop reacting to stimuli that are not relevant to the task).
- Stage 3: In the meantime, the brain is busy “sorting out” stimuli from within and without — most of which the brain blocks out or brakes down while letting in those that are helpful to the task in question.
- Stage 4: The task is concluded. The exhausted *ARTEL*, that is, the cells of the main centre of excitement, slows down and goes to rest; during this rest, “work energy” is restored with surplus.³ This process is called anabolism and can take place *only* on condition that the *dominanta* has been concluded. The task may need hours, days, weeks, months, however long, but the initiated *dominanta* must be realized, otherwise there will be no growth in that sphere. Ousting or interrupting it by another *dominanta* leads to atrophy.

These conditions bring us back to Arshavsky: action, rest and stress together induce growth and all of them rely on strictly self-regulatory mechanisms that signal to the organism (human or nonhuman), when to change activities (physical versus intellectual, for instance), how much to strain, and when the task is complete. If forced to overwork, the *dominanta* exhausts itself, does not have the time to recover, and dies. At the same time, if it fails to reach its maximum limit of physiological stress, it cannot recharge with surplus anabolism and hence atrophies.

Learning and growth are thus intimately interconnected with movement and wildness, which is expressed by the needs of the *dominanta* whose realization is a complex process involving at least social, psychological, physiological factors and probably others waiting to be discovered. This process can *only* be a personal endeavour and it ensures diversity in the world expressed in the singular paths that each individual takes towards cognition. Wild knowledge is the aggregate of the variety of paces, interests and personalities that depend on the mutual respect of *dominantas*, all of which are required for cosmic balance. Contemporary obligatory schooling endangers our world with timetables, bells, imposed curriculum, literacy and its methods of coercion, because *dominanta* requires the effort of *will* and can never be completed through punishment, blackmail and prizes, where good and bad grades or scholarships and the retraction of money are efficient tools that act as the negative stress of destruction imposed from the outside.

Rearing and caring for the *dominanta*, says Arshavsky, is the ultimate expression of love. By that he means that respecting one's own and the other's *dominanta* inevitably creates conscientious, creative and respectful beings and can solve the problem of the escalating social violence, crimes committed

against people and nature, and wars. Ultimately, it always hearkens back to wilderness. However, contemporary society is organized to destroy the will and the *dominanta* in order to create docile workers and consumers. The medical and educational sectors are the crucial “departments” in this institution responsible for the transmission and re-enactment of these self-destructive values that nurture Freud’s version of “love,” not Arshavsky’s.

Institutionalization of *Habitus*

“Institution” is what organizes and authorizes the establishment we refer to as education as well as the other interrelated social organs of civilization. Here, I use the term “institution” to designate the administrative hierarchy, which ensures that the ontological premises of civilized epistemology are re-enacted regardless of the human resources’ will and interests. Institutions cannot exist in the wild because wilderness is self-organized solidarity of *dominantas*. To organize and structure social practices as the skeletal bones of civilized society, the institution first has to delegitimize wild knowledge and then institute authority in order to legitimize the needs of the hierarchy while alienating people from their own needs, because the needs of the institution usually are in conflict with the needs of the people it colonizes. Through education, the institution thus occupies concrete bodies and minds. As domesticated people come to embody their institutions, the civilized come to see institutions as natural, inevitable and organic. Civilized society itself is therefore an institution that gets realized through specific feelings, attitudes and acts. It can never be only words or only structure. It needs people to live according to its needs. Through people it acquires its organic aspect.

In this respect, institution is more than just structure as it acquires a life of its own rooted in people’s beliefs, their logical and mostly illogical faith, and their feeling of belonging through similarity and routine. Institutions materialize themselves through our actions, experiences, emotions and aspirations. Thus, institutions depend on dogma (“natural” science, religion, philosophy, etc.) to offer “convincing” explanations — particularly to the disinterested parties — as to the natural state of civilization and suffering. “Education” first formulates those explanations and then educates people accordingly to accept their social roles, ideally domesticating them to desire and “choose” the imposed positions and functions. This becomes apparent when someone is treated medically or “therapeutically” for not choosing an assigned role or not being happy with it. The “depressed” or unhappy individuals are “integrated” or recycled into civilization by means of medication, therapy and other “professional” methods of intervention designed to make the person “adapt” rather than accept depression as a symptom of resistance. In fact, I argue that the methods, in pedagogical and psychological interventions, are a curriculum in their own right, inculcating a specific *habitus* and *body hexis* by whose means individuals continue to reproduce their

institutions. This interdependence of institution and education makes the essence of education tricky and elusive.

In *The Logic of Practice*, Pierre Bourdieu analyses the inscription of history within the flesh, blood and the bone marrow of the human being.

The *habitus* — embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history — is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world. The *habitus* is a spontaneity without consciousness or will, opposed as much to the mechanical necessity of things without history in mechanistic theories as it is to the reflexive freedom of subjects “without inertia” in rationalist theories. (Bourdieu 1990)

Bourdieu's *habitus* reveals the process of embodiment or the materialization of history that drives a person to make specific decisions and actions. In a way, it becomes the meaning of human life inscribed in the human being as text; more important, it becomes an inevitable text, despite the fact that often it may seem original or innovative. The drive that prompts people to act in specific ways is the same force that impels them to extract specific meanings from the world. In other words, our emotional and intellectual reactions come from a deeper place than the conscious level; they come from the forgotten intelligence of the flesh and, in this sense, the body itself constitutes the first textual medium that records narratives of civilization and wilderness.

The dialectic of the meaning of the language and the “sayings of the tribe” is a particular and particularly significant case of the dialectic between *habitus* and institutions, that is, between two modes of objectification of past history, in which there is constantly created a history that inevitably appears, like witticisms, as both original and inevitable (ibid.).

Bourdieu links the *habitus* of individualized history to that of the institution, because the institution is made up of individual bodies, but at the same time institutions create their individuals and bodies — a kind of predetermined cycle of reproduction:

[To] be reproduced in the form of the durable, adjusted dispositions that are the condition of their functioning, the *habitus*, which is constituted in the course of an individual history, imposing its particular logic on incorporation, and through which agents partake of the

history objectified in institutions, is what makes it possible to inhabit institutions, to appropriate them practically, and so to keep them in activity, continuously pulling them from the state of dead letters, reviving the sense deposited in them, but at the same time imposing the revisions and transformations that reactivation entails. Or rather, the *habitus* is what enables the institution to attain full realization: it is through the capacity for incorporation, which exploits the body's readiness to take seriously the performative magic of the social, that the king, the banker or the priest are hereditary monarchy, financial capitalism or the Church made flesh. (ibid.)

The inculcation of *habitus* is thus vital for the life of institutions. Because the interests of domestication conflict with the interests of its subjects yearning for wilderness and life, it is crucial for the institution that its individuals make choices for its advantage regardless of their own needs. This reproduction of the institution takes over the personal concerns through the insemination of its drive that prompts specific reactions, feelings, and what Bourdieu calls *praxis* or the economy of effort through automatic behaviour that *habitus* makes possible at the irrational, even bodily level.

This drive is not something that is inherent, genetic or religious. It is socially instilled physiology. If learned naturally obeying the conditions outlined by Arshavsky, the instilled drive nurtures the instinct of life and love. In the animal kingdom, individual interests coincide with the interests of the species and, in Arshavsky's words (Nikitina 1998), animals are conscientious because they follow the laws of nature. In contrast, having eradicated wild freedom, the civilized human animal has invented a menu of domesticated choices, choosing repeatedly to disobey nature, including his own, often to personal detriment. Freud refers to this as the "destructive instinct." If the being develops in a suppressed and oppressed environment, the *habitus* becomes that of hatred and destruction; but, regardless, the socialized individuals continue at all cost to reproduce their institutions.

To illustrate, I discuss two examples of how people choose the interests of their institutions, even when those work against themselves. The first example is an obvious one, the second, my case study, is much less so.

Predicting the Future

"The most profound decisions about justice are not made by individuals as such, but by individuals thinking within and on behalf of institutions" (Douglas 1987: 91). As Mary Douglas writes, "institutions bestow sameness" (ibid.: 63); they confer identity and reproduce themselves with and through individuals.

Institutions are embodied in individual experience by means of roles. The roles, objectified linguistically, are an essential ingredient of the objectively available world of any society. By playing roles,

the individual participates in a social world. By internalizing these roles, the same world becomes subjectively real to him. (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 91)

This is why, Mary Douglas explains, societies experiencing famine in Africa will always reproduce the social patterns, hierarchies and roles: everyone knows which group is going to be the first to starve out, yet every member of that society, *including the dying group itself*, will accept and re-enact the roles almost to the letter — beginning with the “international development and peace keepers” and ending with the dying-out persons and groups themselves. The meaning of such suffering will have little, if any, bearing on how those responsible for the genocide, either actively or by participating in the consumer culture, continue to behave. None of the parties — neither those responsible for nor those profiting from starvation, not even the starving persons themselves — modify their behaviour, because the drive for predation and victimization will always ascribe civilized meaning to their actions and suffering regardless of experience.

Thus, it is possible, even though unpleasant, for the well-off to watch victims of wars in Balkan, African or Middle Eastern lands on television during supper while participating in the consumption of products whose availability depends on these wars: coffee, petroleum products (fuel, plastics, synthetic fabrics, et al.), sugar, Coca-cola or whatever else that makes one lifestyle depend on the suffering of those whose deaths flicker on the TV screen. In other words, this is a cyclical lifestyle where satisfaction depends on the starvation that happens because of the TV gazers' satisfaction. Of course, this is less obvious when the victim herself reproduces the institution. However, Douglas illustrates convincingly how victims of famine re-enact their roles despite the availability of food not only in the world at large, but in their own land as well.

Moreover, the depiction of the events of famine, war and death may be extremely verbose. In fact, it has to be verbose, since language and verbosity veil the content. The verbose aspect of contemporary Western society is relevant to this topic precisely because education depends on literacy and verbosity having substituted the natural learning patterns of introspection, action, and motion — which can be expressed in growth — with inaction, overstimulation and verbal abstraction — which can be seen as subtraction from the real. The institution of education has substituted learning with teaching and concrete learning with verbose teaching. In other words, the contemporary method of institutionalization atrophies the *dominanta* and instead zombifies the student, filling her with excessive and contradictory images and verbal content. Once again, the forces of life are replaced with death producing a verbal flood.

Thereby, by using examples from Africa, Douglas outlines a pattern of

communal victimization that is central to the predatory nature of civilized relationships and illustrates how individuals favour their civilized institution even when its interests harm them. We can discern a similar pattern in the "West," albeit a less obvious one, because Western "society" projects a self-image of being well off and promotes the myth of the individual or self as something "free," "independent" and master of others and the world.

The Industrial *Habitus* of Education

A common myth in civilization praises the virtues of industrialization and claims that industrialization has almost liberated people from work; for, supposedly machines have replaced the personal effort and made life easier and more comfortable. In reality, people spend more time at work and less time with families than in pre-industrial times, where working people toiled to feed the wealthy landowners, entrepreneurs, politicians, government administrators and so on, and still had time to raise their own children — in addition to raising and nursing the wealthy children. However, according to Marshall Sahlins (1974) and Lasse Nordlund (2008), noncivilized gatherer societies are the ones who had the most and the highest quality time of all.

Just as it has always been under domestication, people today hardly have the time to be with their families, spending their most efficient time locked up at work, while their children get rounded up for forced — referred to as obligatory — education in schools. The love and the life that used to be transmitted in the intimacy of family relations between the young and the old and their world have now been replaced by professionals and schedules, which is what kills growth, conscience, intelligence and creativity, instilling in these children the instinct of death and forcing them into the structure of violence. In North America, fulltime nurseries accept children as early as one month old.

Even though education is compulsory "only" until high school, university is viewed as a prize to be sought after. This "noncompulsory" yet highly desired stage in the educational programme is responsible for sorting out the "information" for the already prepared "consumer" of information thus reinforcing the hierarchy and methods instilled in pre-university schooling.

The founders of these institutions, according to John Taylor Gatto, a distinguished public school teacher and researcher in education, are the military in Europe and the industrial capitalists in the U.S.⁴

The real makers of modern schooling were leaders of the new American industrial class, men like: Andrew Carnegie, the steel baron ... John D. Rockefeller, the duke of oil ... Henry Ford, master of the assembly line which compounded steel and oil into a vehicular dynasty ... and J.P. Morgan, the king of capitalist finance. (Gatto 2003)

In *Dumbing Us Down*, Gatto highlights the goal of schooling.

Schools were designed by Horace Mann and by Sears and Harper of the University of Chicago and by Thorndyke of Columbia Teachers College and by some other men to be instruments of the scientific management of a mass population. Schools are intended to produce, through the application of formulas, formulaic human beings whose behavior can be predicted and controlled. (Gatto 1992)

However, a more revealing detail of the nature of contemporary schooling is its historical importation from Europe.

The structure of American schooling, 20th century style, began in 1806 when Napoleon's amateur soldiers beat the professional soldiers of Prussia at the battle of Jena.... Almost immediately afterwards a German philosopher named Fichte delivered his famous "Address to the German Nation" which became one of the most influential documents in modern history. In effect he told the Prussian people that the party was over, that the nation would have to shape up through a new Utopian institution of forced schooling in which everyone would learn to take orders.

So the world got compulsion schooling at the end of a state bayonet for the first time in human history; modern forced schooling started in Prussia in 1819 with a clear vision of what centralized schools could deliver:

- Obedient soldiers to the army;
- Obedient workers to the mines;
- Well subordinated civil servants to government;
- Well subordinated clerks to industry;
- Citizens who thought alike about major issues.⁵

Needless to say, the army is the institution of death per se. More important, it is an institution of imposed death, that is, murder, and as discussed earlier, it is inscribed in the very ontology of education. This lethal aspect of education is not surprising in light of the above analysis of the physiological nature of learning discussed by Nikitina and Arshavsky and in the context of civilization. In fact, it is its logical link in history. The methods developed in this case respond to the need to eliminate not only the adversary outside, but also the one inside (i.e., intelligence, wildness and will) in order to create obedience, subordination and what Gatto calls outright "dumbness."

Old-fashioned dumbness used to be simple ignorance; now it is transformed from ignorance into permanent mathematical categories of relative stupidity like "gifted and talented," "mainstream," "special

ed." Categories in which learning is rationed for the good of a system of order....

If you believe nothing can be done for the dumb except kindness, because it's biology (the bell-curve model); if you believe capitalist oppressors have ruined the dumb because they are bad people (the neo-Marxist model); if you believe dumbness reflects depraved moral fiber (the Calvinist model); or that it's nature's way of disqualifying boobies from the reproduction sweepstakes (the Darwinian model); or nature's way of providing someone to clean your toilet (the pragmatic elitist model); or that it's evidence of bad karma (the Buddhist model); if you believe any of the various explanations given for the position of the dumb in the social order we have, then you will be forced to concur that a vast bureaucracy is indeed necessary to address the dumb....

Mass dumbness first had to be imagined; it isn't real.

Once the dumb are wished into existence, they serve valuable functions: as a danger to themselves and others they have to be watched, classified, disciplined, trained, medicated, sterilized, ghettoized, cajoled, coerced, jailed. To idealists they represent a challenge, reprobates to be made socially useful.... An ignorant horde to be schooled one way or another. (Gatto 1992)

In response to civilization's needs, education cultivates dumbness and lies as a norm. The paradox here is that dumbness is depicted as a negative affliction to be cured in its semantic rendition, but in practice is obligatory and positive. Certified dumbness and obedience is an end to be desired and is rewarded with diplomas, prizes and ultimately a job. The attitude of "I don't know, don't care, and don't want to know" is particularly prominent among the future educators in the university where I have taught. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published an article in November 2010, in which a prolific ghostwriter discusses the extent of cheating on every single level of the institution of education and in every single discipline, says:

I live well on the desperation, misery, and incompetence that your educational system has created....

With respect to America's nurses, fear not. Our lives are in capable hands — just hands that can't write a lick. Nursing students account for one of my company's biggest customer bases. I've written case-management plans, reports on nursing ethics, and essays on why nurse practitioners are lighting the way to the future of medicine. I've even written pharmaceutical-treatment courses, for patients who I hope were hypothetical.

I, who have no name, no opinions, and no style, have written so many papers at this point, including legal briefs, military-strategy assessments, poems, lab reports, and, yes, even papers on academic

integrity, that it's hard to determine which course of study is most infested with cheating. But I'd say education is the worst. I've written papers for students in elementary-education programs, special-education majors, and ESL-training courses. I've written lesson plans for aspiring high-school teachers, and I've synthesized reports from notes that customers have taken during classroom observations. I've written essays for those studying to become school administrators, and I've completed theses for those on course to become principals. In the enormous conspiracy that is student cheating, the frontline intelligence community is infiltrated by double agents. (Future educators of America, I know who you are.) (Dante 2010)

In other words, in addition to widespread plagiarism, cheating, general failure and an incessant devaluation of grades and degrees, many of the successful essays, theses and dissertations are a mishmash of words pulled together by a con artist who has "no name, no opinions, and no style" (*ibid.*).

Once again, this is not to say that every single individual in this system inevitably re-enacts and embodies the will of the institution. There is yearning to go feral and there is resistance in both students and teachers, for both are trapped in this panoptic prison, and their yearning and resistance, as Einstein says in the opening quote to this chapter, persists in spite of education, not because of it. In reality, however, the majority of students and faculty have their interests vested in the status quo of the current food chain. In my experience of teaching third- and fourth-year undergraduates studying to be schoolteachers at a university in Quebec, students panic when I show them empathy and trust and insist on being graded "fairly" even as they fail in doing the only task I ask: understand your interlocutor (an author is one too) and tell me what you need. They panic even though I tell them that I shall not fail them for having tried and worked. Some would announce from the beginning of the term: "I am a C student. I thought I should let you know that I don't expect a lower grade." The majority of the students, with few exceptions, refused to step out of the "C," "B" or whatever categories when I told them that I did not believe in grades, and that I would evaluate the work only because I was required to do so. I explained that we would work on the grading process together after we discussed what improvements they could make in understanding and analyzing. Still, they insisted on being tested on their "knowledge," but that "knowledge" lacked any basic, coherent information pertaining to the world.

Few students showed enthusiasm for having the freedom to explore and to be liberated from judgement and grades. According to recent scholarship on the topic of gender and race in academia, women in general experience more challenges from students and colleagues, but women of colour receive the most resistance and blame and concurrently much less institutional support,

which points to the deeply entrenched categorization and fear — precisely what the institution works to instil.⁶ Of course, there always remain those whose empathy and intelligence survive the dumbing down curriculum. However, if dumbness is the norm in the masses, then intelligence fulfilled becomes a rare occurrence in the realm of genius. The “geniuses” usually arise in conditions that do not stifle the natural passion to learn and allow the *dominanta* to complete its cycles. If we look at the biographies of those deemed “genius” in Occidental civilization, many have been home-schooled. Blaise Pascal, for instance, was “unschooled” in mathematics. However, the label “genius” is a civilized term that still defines someone at the “service” of the current ideological system. There is another category of those who have neither risen to the status of genius nor have succumbed to the dumbing and killing methods of domestication. These are the schizophrenics, the manic-depressives and other such lot, who resist but whom “society” attempts to cure and recycle. Finally, there are those who simply rebel.

Despite the fact that dumbing down is an intensive practice in pre-university education, professors in graduate seminars frequently remind students of their place in the hierarchy and repeatedly treat students as lazy and evasive or as stupid and ignorant: “I’ll make you read, you won’t escape work” or “You don’t know, you’re slow to understand, do you get it at all, you don’t know how to write, you can’t even locate your own *problématique* in your own head let alone express it on paper.”

I wrote these observations in the spring of 2003. Almost a decade later, things have not changed, as Emma Thornton’s article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, entitled “You’re All Going to Fail,” confirms:

When I was learning to be an academic, my impression was that you found out how smart someone was, then taught that person to be smarter. I didn’t think you were supposed to find out how stupid certain students were, then assume they would never get any better. (Thornton, 2012)

This is more than a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is a reiteration of the framework that cements the place of each resource in domestication and lives up to its goal of stupidifying the resources. Ironically, the argument that “in reality, students arrive at this level and still do not know” is an accurate observation but which only confirms Gatto’s “dumbing down” premise; for, if after decades of schooling they still have not learned, what was the meaning of their institutionalization in kindergarten, schools and universities? Moreover, what is the point of repeating “you don’t know” for decades if, obviously, it does not help them to “know” and only reinforces the “fact” that decades later, they still “do not know”?

In “The Seven-lesson Schoolteacher,” Gatto explains this phenomenon as he confesses to teaching the following in the early school years:

- Confusion: Because everything is out of context or is in abstract and imagined context.
- Class position.
- Indifference: “When the bell rings... the students stop whatever it is that we’ve been working on and proceed quickly to the next work station.... Indeed, the lesson of the bells is that no work is worth finishing, so why care too deeply about anything? Years of bells will condition ... to a world that can no longer offer important work to do. Bells are the secret logic of schooltime.... Bells destroy the past and future, converting every interval into a sameness, as an abstract map makes every living mountain and river the same even though they are not. Bells inoculate each undertaking with indifference.”
- Emotional dependency: He teaches children to surrender their will to the chain of command, using “stars and red checks, smiles and frowns, prizes, honors and disgraces.”
- Intellectual dependency: The most important lesson. Children must wait for the expert authority to make all the important decisions, to tell them what to study. There is no place for curiosity, only conformity.
- Provisional self-esteem: Because it is so difficult to make self-confident spirits conform, children must be taught that their self-respect depends on expert opinion. They must be constantly tested, evaluated, judged, graded, and reported on by certified officials. Self-evaluation is irrelevant — “people must be told what they are worth.”
- You can’t hide: Children are always watched. No privacy. People can’t be trusted.

If Gatto is talking about schoolchildren, the university methods are based on the same principles: they grade, mentor, supervise, police, punish and reward, and constantly distract with funding deadlines, which create a permanent atmosphere of imminent collapse. My invitation to venture beyond grades only exacerbated my students’ anguish, and some of them became openly hostile towards me when I talked about education systems around the world (e.g., Sweden, Finland, and some colleges and universities in the U.S.).

Gatto summarizes the consequences of the seven lessons as follows:

- The private Self is almost non-existent; children develop a superficial personality borrowed from TV shows.
- Desperate dependence.
- Unease with intimacy or candor; dislike for parents; no real close friends; lust replaces love.

- Indifference to the adult world; very little curiosity about anything; boredom.
- A poor sense of the future; consciousness limited to the present.
- Cruelty to each other.
- Striking materialism.
- The expectation to fail; the idea that success has to be stolen.

These conclusions resonate remarkably with Arshavsky's warnings regarding the importance of love and respect for *dominantas*. The instincts of love and life are being murdered in the institutions of teaching. This also resonates with Douglas' observation that when raised in a cultural system, individuals will re-enact their institutional roles even when these lead to their own demise. Like the aliens of Hollywood films, these institutions acquire a life of their own, independent of and concurrently living off their victim's *habitus* and *praxis*, while the victims themselves wilfully submit to rearing the institution rather than their own and their children's *dominanta*.

The Verdict

Next to the right to life itself, the most fundamental of all human rights is the right to control our own minds and thoughts.... Whoever takes that right away from us, by trying to "educate" us, attacks the very center of our being and does us a most profound and lasting injury. He tells us, in effect, that we cannot be trusted even to think....

Education ... Seems to me perhaps the most authoritarian and dangerous of all the social inventions of mankind. It is the deepest foundation of the modern and worldwide slave state.... My concern is not to improve "education" but to do away with it, to end the ugly and antihuman business of people-shaping and to allow and help people to shape themselves. (Holt 1976)

John Holt, the teacher who coined the term "unschooling," wrote "in favor of doing — self-directed, purposeful, meaningful life and work — and against 'education' — learning cut off from active life and done under pressure of bribe or threat, greed and fear" (ibid.).

Education, war, colonialism and globalism (i.e., the main ingredients of civilization) are all driven by bribery, threat, greed and fear. Globalism is the economic outcome of the colonization of many cultural logics by a dominant one, which is the very principle of standardized education. The cradle of today's globalism is Europe. After all, it is from there that the modern colonizers have emerged, sweeping over and destroying Aboriginal cultures and logics. But colonization is not an essentialist characteristic of Europeans. After all, they themselves have been only recently colonized. A mere thousand years ago, for instance, Barbarians were resisting the onslaught of civilized coloni-

zation from the south. Perhaps, from the onset, the early humans emerging out of Africa ninety thousand years ago have, in a sense, been colonizing the world in the places where they adopted sedentary lifestyles and taking over these spaces by evicting or simply exterminating others. Still, even though the modern human brain is smaller, compared to the Cro-Magnon or the Neanderthals, for example, most of these humans have succeeded to tread the earth with dignity, care and respect for life while nurturing communities of wilderness. Whenever civilization erupted, its ontology contaminated and spread like an epidemic.

The *habitus*, *body hexis* and *praxis* can explain the tenacity and proliferation of domestication, since the logic of the institution re-enacts itself through individuals regardless of their personal interests or place in the hierarchy. Conforming to the logic of the institution, parents succumb to forced “education” and the educated accept the murder of their *dominanta*. This conformation is also at the basis of *habitus* in the teacher’s *praxis* or the teacher’s economy of effort. On behalf of the interests of the institution, whether wittingly or not, the teacher exercises this economy in grading when she inadvertently looks for the institution in the work of the student, marking “right” when she finds it and “wrong” when she does not.

In reality, right and wrong can only be moral judgements; in terms of correctness, there are infinite possibilities. Even “two plus two equals four” is not obvious, for it depends on what goes into the definitions of the twos and the four. If I choose to consider the uncountable and the invisible soul in counting two visibly pregnant women and their two visible husbands, I may end up with six or seven. Some Indigenous people count the spirits of ancestors or animals along with the living. It all depends on what, how, and, most important, why are we counting.

Hence, when a teacher judges a student’s work as right or wrong, grading it according to a scale of rightness, it is not “correctness” that is being looked for, but rather an expression of values. In civilization, these values will always be domesticated, for the only gauge for right and wrong there can be is one that allows us to feel the extent of the pain of others and then changing ourselves to heal that pain, which through empathy becomes our own.

In the end, the content of what is being said means little — it is the method that creates the result. For, the pedagogical methods themselves constitute a curriculum in their own right, inculcating a specific *habitus* through which individuals may continually reproduce their institutions. In this way, the content of a teacher’s lecture is not what really affects the students. It is the *fact* of the teacher lecturing that has the weight, since even if the lecture is about “freedom” and “compassion,” it imposes a relationship of authority and monologue instead of dialogue and interlocution. It is the *fact* of the constant bells and interruptions that kill the *dominanta*. It is the *fact* of being coerced into wanting good grades. It is the *fact* of the teacher believing

that they determine the quality of the life that the person will live and the quality of the person that the teaching will produce. It is the outright threat and danger capable of crushing one's future, one's yearning for wilderness — threats that descend from those who create the "curriculum" of what we are "obliged" to learn in our obligatory schooling and seminars, that bully us into learning the civilized formula that sells our longing for life in exchange for sterile dreams.

To return to the opening quote from John Holt: adults don't love their children and school is the institutional confirmation of that fact. What love can we talk about in the context of self-destruction, when this crucial and fragile aspect of human life we call love is distorted to death? The institution does not love its children. It lives for its own logic, the logic of civilization. This lack of love scars the children, often for life.

Still, as mentioned earlier, there has always been resistance to civilization and strategies of healing. To return to the interview on therapy and education, Janis Timm-Bottos blames our emphasis on cognition for the rupture of communities and our suffering, and sees hope for healing through the recuperation of spaces, a process also known as rewilding.

It is because our culture favours cognition and intelligence over empathy that we're in this mess to begin with. But, it is important to question this overdependence on cognition and much of therapy allows us to go in a different door, not the cognitive one. What I love about therapy is that it is about the care for another human being and ourselves. It is about interacting, what I call, through the back door, through the back part of the brain where we really don't have any control and which is actually the brainstem. It is automatic, it helps us breathe, it keeps track of all the automatic parts of what we do as humans, and so, in so many ways, it works through that subconscious system up to the frontal lobe where the cognition is said to be located. With education, there is an overdependence on working the other way around, where we try to feed into the front part of the brain and hope that somehow it's going to make it into our automatic, into our way of being. But it doesn't work like that. You cannot go in through the cognitive way and expect people to know how to create community. So, education has formulated in the opposite direction of what really is a natural way of moving forward with caring for each other in empathetic ways. (Interview with Timm-Bottos, 2012)

Our healing depends on community. It depends on diversity in that community and that extends across species, across the binding dimensions of time and space, even across the borders that delimit our notions of life. Indigenous people knew how to resist civilization. They healed from the

Mayan, the Aztec, and the other less known forms of this unknowledge and death. Letting the rock, the water, and the sky speak to us as we open ourselves to life, Zitkala-Ša writes:

When the spirit swells my breast I love to roam leisurely among the green hills; or sometimes, sitting on the brink of the murmuring Missouri, I marvel at the great blue overhead. With half closed eyes I watch the huge cloud shadows in their noiseless play upon the high bluffs opposite me, while into my ears ripple the sweet, soft cadences of the river's song. Folded hands lie in my lap, for the time forgot. My heart and I lie small upon the earth like a grain of throbbing sand. Drifting clouds and tinkling waters, together with the warmth of a genial summer day, bespeak with eloquence the loving Mystery round about us....

At length retracing the uncertain footpath scaling the precipitous embankment, I seek the level lands where grow the wild prairie flowers. And they, the lovely little folk, soothe my soul with their perfumed breath.

Their quaint round faces of varied hue convince the heart which leaps with glad surprise that they, too, are living symbols of omnipotent thought. With a child's eager eye I drink in the myriad star shapes wrought in luxuriant color upon the green. Beautiful is the spiritual essence they embody. (Zitkala-Ša: 1902)

Notes

1. BBC News, 9 May 2010; Liu Zhen (May 20, 2010), "College Students Stabbed in Dorms in South China," Reuters, retrieved 26 August 2010; Jaime FlorCruz (May 3, 2010), "Execution Does Not Stop Chinese Knife Attacks," CNN; on classroom violence in the U.K., <guardian.co.uk/education/classroomviolence>.
2. For a deeper discussion of how schools persistently abuse the poor, see historical and anthropological accounts by such scholars as David Nasaw, Jonathan Kozol or Cynthia Cole Robinson.
3. Acronym for the Cooperative Association for Workers and Peasants.
4. Until his resignation due to disillusionment with the profession, each year from 1989 to 1991 Gatto was named New York City Teacher of the Year. In 1991, the New York Senate named him State Teacher of the Year.
5. Gatto from *The Public School Nightmare: Why Fix a System Designed to Destroy Individual Thought*.
6. See Turner, or Schik and St. Denis, The Ferris University project on Racism in Academia, among other sources.

In the End and towards a Feral Future

Biology textbooks use growth and movement to distinguish life from non-life: the living organism grows and therefore moves. It moves in time by reproducing itself and transmitting its *habitus* and *praxis*. It uses energy and responds to the environment.¹ The nonliving matter supposedly does not do any of that. This concept gets drilled into us at an early age. Primary schooling introduces it in simple vocabulary and by the time the child grows up, these definitions feel natural and matter-of-fact. That is, they sit well in the civilized *body hexis*.

When children are not schooled, they play with these concepts creatively and discover new ways of relating to knowledge. Without the fear of punishment, they can draw conclusions that are not on the list of school requirements. This excerpt from my journal shows how an unschooled child explores the scientific narrative and demonstrates how personal each path in learning is and how enriching this learning can be to the adults if they take children's observations seriously and not as "mistakes," at worst, or cute, harmless wrong answers, at best.²

When Ljuba was nine years old, every midnight she would insist on reading geology — a 520-page C4 paper tome.³ My child's postmidnight scientific inspirations have been testing my patience since she was eight months old, for I have always been a morning person. Still, listening to her read aloud as I kept dozing off was magical. I helped occasionally with unfamiliar terms and learned new things about the texts as well as about children's interactions with knowledge. Prior to her fascination with geology, Ljuba was indulging in biology and psychology, where she first came across the characteristics of life as an organism that grows and moves. According to those sources, living matter was thus distinct from the nonliving "objects," such as rocks. Luhr (2003), however, uses biological terms to describe the earth, such as "anatomy of the earth" or "the changing earth," that refers to the earth as someone who "moves" and "grows," (i.e., it alters its being in time and space).

"Most minerals are solid crystalline substances composed of atoms," the text reads. "A crystal is a solid such as a mineral with an orderly repeating atomic structure. With unrestricted growth, it forms a geometric shape with naturally flat planes" (ibid.).

Ljuba was puzzled. "But if nonliving matter doesn't grow, how come minerals can have unrestricted growth? The minerals must be

alive then. And so must be crystals. But what about stones and rocks?" Thus our nocturnal conversation led to all sorts of ontological considerations. We recalled the dark but beautiful Soviet film *The Story of the Voyages* (1985) in which Marta, the heroine in search of her kidnapped brother, travels through different landscapes peopled by singular cultures.⁴ Everywhere in civilization, she sees abuse, pain, suffering and death. One of the peoples among whom she sojourns make their living pumping oil from the earth and delivering it to a warrior group of extortionists. Both groups have gone mad in this relationship. As Marta leaves them, she turns around, and from the distance sees that what they believe to be drilling is not barren land, but a living whale who suffers and the oil they are pumping is its blood.

"Maybe, these books don't know everything about the earth, after all," my daughter concluded. "It might turn out that stones feel pain too." Children are thus capable of formulating theological and ontological questions that are thousands of years old as they ponder over the nature of life and being. For, many Indigenous people have always seen the spirit in stone too.

I recalled this conversation later as I was revising the literature on evolutionary theory, whose most magnificent idea comes from paleobiology, the concept that all life shares common origins because it came from an electrochemical gradient between alkali and acid in the sea water, which provided the basis for the living cell: acetyl phosphate and pyrophosphate. We are then all connected to the sea but also related to all forms of life, including the rocks on the ocean floor. That electric current, charged by storms, has been the sparkle of genius driving our unrelenting yearning, so beautifully captured by Tove Jansson in the character of the perpetual travellers in Moomin books, the Hattifatteners, whose life force derives from the electric charges generated by the storm, and who are forever drawn by the vast expanses of the sea, desiring nothing but to forever move in silence towards the horizon. They are not blighted by language and are the most mysterious, primal, vital and intense form of life. Tove Jansson, like the Aboriginal storytellers, knew the essence of life. (Journal, September 2008 and January 2010)

Sedentary theory intersects with practice at several points in civilized institutions. However, its contradictions are most prominent in the question of pedagogy, particularly when the content claims that it teaches life through methods that instil death. For, pedagogical methods ensure that, for most of their day, children remain locked in one place: in school, in a classroom, at a desk, and then with homework, television or computer at home. They are thus forced to learn about the world from a highly ordered, restrained and

sedentary position, while memorizing the exact opposite from textbooks, namely, that movement is what distinguishes the living from the nonliving.

This paradox extends to other spheres of civilized life. For instance, people are told from early childhood that economic movement is possible through social climbing as reward for hard work. However, property and classification ensure that there is no real movement or change, and throughout the history of civilization, the human and nonhuman people who work the hardest have been compensated the least; their lives consumed by those who work the least yet who possess and control the most. Because the symbolic capital is linked tightly to real lives, bodies and suffering, exploitative economic systems are bound to collapse if those bodies die. The dispossessed, the disempowered and the millions of beings marginalized from participation in the "resource" structure as agents (who constitute the resources and possessions) are thereby either eliminated through war or left to perish in what the Malthusian explanation holds as the "natural mechanism of population control."

In this light, what sense could a child derive out of the contradiction between the content of the lesson and the pedagogical methods through which it is delivered, if: (A) a child is taught that the definition of life is movement and the definition of death is lack of movement; (B) the child is forced to submit to sedentary incarceration in school and then with homework after school with the evolutionary trajectory set towards a sedentary job? Accepting as true both the definition and the method by means of which the definition is taught, what the child extrapolates from these contradictions is to renounce life itself: "Life means movement, but I cannot move. I am told where to sit and for how long, what to do, learn and how to be. Therefore, I must have died."

This paradox of civilization — that knows that life is movement and yet imposes stillness — is the main point where ontology, anthropology, wildness and civilization intersect. For, if chaos and wildness are the expression of life craving movement even in stone, then the decision to forfeit one's freedom to roam purposelessly and unreasonably binds people to sedentary settlement. Ultimately, these settlements expand into cities. These cities then depend on the exploitation of human and animal labour and the domestication of crops, water, land and even air in conquered and ever-expanding territories. The biodiversity of these territories must be exterminated, for it no longer provides community for the conqueror. Rather, it poses a threat to ownership and competition for resources.

Civilization is thus based on the agricultural practice of monoculturalism (both of crops and of civilized human ontology), in which the countryside becomes a necessary resource submitted to the needs and agency of the city, its conqueror. In order for this system of subsistence and colonialism to work, the resources have to be domesticated or trained to believe that access to food depends on — and their whole existence owes to — how well they

serve their “owners.” That is, they have to be rendered unskilled in the art of life. Thus, monoculturalism affects the civilized intellect too, since the more specialized one’s “skill” becomes, the narrower the mind. Obligatory, civilized education was an evolutionary choice in a sprint towards idiocy.

* * *

The wild purpose of life is to live for one’s own pleasure and leisure. This principle ensures diversity even in the sphere of reproduction. Species reproduce asexually, bisexually, sexually, etc., and wilderness sees an endless diversity in child rearing strategies. Among nonhuman and human primates alone, there is a wide range of parenting cultures: monogamous lemurs and gibbons, polygamous gorillas and chimpanzees, polyandrous gay and lesbian bonobos, among many other possibilities of co-operation in raising children. As discussed, adoption is practised not only within groups, but also across species. There is no single right way to best nurture the young. The key issue in wilderness is that reliance on co-operation and mutual aid accentuates one’s perception of interconnectedness with the world and, in turn, formulates one’s knowledge of the world as being contingent on respecting the wildness of others and letting them be. Wild spaces thus prompt individuals to operate from the position that their fate is interlocked with that of their co-worlders and that they are only specks in the universe, one species among many. This perspective depends on the ability to tune in to the experience of others. It requires the ability to imagine what others live and feel and being capable of connecting this information with one’s own life. Thus, empathy is the key to intelligence and together with imagination, interconnectedness, co-operation and respect for the choices of others constitute the exigent components of sustainable culture.

This stands in stark contrast to the domesticated construction of unknown knowledge through representation, separation and formulaic reasoning, where the human *body hexis* itself constitutes an institution of domesticated sexuality, a patriarchal and patrilineal socio-politic, and a socio-economic paradigm based on rape and exploitation. In such monoculturalist, heteronormative, gendered, racialized and speciesist cultures, challenges to the “norm” are taken as “the exceptions that prove the rule.” All of this becomes part of the *doxa*, the understood and unarticulated knowledge that engineers children as “human resources.” Like the machine, the child undergoes a process of programming referred to as “education,” where the very conception of tools, resources and machines defines her in terms of her purpose to exist for someone else’s need to consume, control, tame, possess and exploit. In this way, the concept of resources is the first step towards conceptualizing the civilized human and the machine as both are tightly interwoven with all forms of labour, production and reproduction, imposing a dependence on the organic and inorganic prostheses the civilized culture has created.

Civilization and education are irreconcilable with mutual relationships and self-purpose; they are antithetical to knowledge and life. Nonetheless, even if born into civilization, human children still learn through experience, whereby a child mobilizes all her physiological senses, including her empathic ability to feel and know the world. In this sense, we have not evolved and children continue to be born wild, experiencing the world in its full spectrum of colours, emotions, smells, sounds and tastes. They dream of diversity and in this they remain wild animal children whose intelligence draws them to chaos.

Ljuba is three years and four months old. We have never spoken of prayer to her or the divine because we see it as a deeply personal issue that is socially or politically irresolvable. Just like my parents did with me, I decided to leave it up to her to figure out her position vis-à-vis the spiritual aspect of the cosmos and her personal relationship with it.

One warm night in July, as I heard the soft breathing of sleep and caught that sweet smell of a nursed, cuddled baby, I started tip-toeing out of the room, when I heard her quiet voice in the dark: "Mama, I pray to God every night so that everybody and every child in this world be as loved as I am."

Wild children dream of the divine wilderness of love for the world.

Notes

1. See Chapter 4 on the "Characteristics of Life" in New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge, *Science Grade 4*, Trenton, New Jersey.
2. The American philosopher Gareth Matthews has been publishing on philosophy with children, taking their questions seriously on the nature of justice, democracy, minority rights, etc.
3. The book was *Earth*, edited by James F. Luhr (2003), published by the Smithsonian Institution.
4. [Сказка Странствий]. On the film database <imdb.com>, the title is translated as "Story;" however, in Russian, *Skazka* (сказка) is a fairy tale.

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